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THE

# MOUNTAINS OF THE BIBLE:

THEIR

## SCENES AND THEIR LESSONS.

BY THE

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GLASGOW.

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# PREFACE.

The history of this publication is a very common one. The volume contains the substance of a series of Lectures which the writer delivered in the ordinary course of his ministry, upon each successive Sabbath during the winter 1847–48. This will sufficiently account for any peculiarity of style that may be observable.

The people among whom he has the happiness to labor, have urged him to publish the Lectures; and after some hesitation, he has consented. They are now given to them and to the world, from the same motive that led to their preparation for the pulpit—a desire to be useful.

The gloomy season during which these Lectures were delivered, will be long remembered as one of disaster and bereavement. The design wrought out in them, he has been led to believe, accomplished the comforting and counselling of not a few, who were walking "through the valley of the shadow of death." It is his earnest prayer, that their publication in this form may exceed the usefulness of their original delivery.

The topographical descriptions of the Mountains are, of course, the results of research into the works of other writers, and especially of intelligent travellers. In some few instances, in this section of the volume, the writer may not have adequately acknowledged his obligations, as he parted with his principal authorities before the purpose of publication had

been formed. He has endeavored, however, to mark the quotations as faithfully as he could. If any omissions of this nature are noticed, he trusts this explanation will be accepted.

Whoever opens this book in the hope of meeting with new and erudite views, or with critical and metaphysical discussions, must be disappointed. The object of the writer is to collect, under one general designation, some of the more familiar, but withal most important truths of the gospel, and to present them in a plain, affectionate, and practical form, so that, while he ministers to the understanding, the heart also may be appealed to for its consent to sound doctrine. The Scenes and Lessons of the Mountains of the Bible furnish ample and fascinating materials for both objects; and he hopes he has been enabled, in however humble a measure, to avail himself of these for the edification of the reader.

He now commits the work to Him who "despises not the day of small things;" and who will bless every sincere effort to promote his glory by doing good to mankind.

*Glasgow*, 1*st Dec.*, 1848.

# CONTENTS.


PAGE

INTRODUCTION, . . . . . 7

ARARAT.

PART I. THE MOUNTAIN, . . . . . 18
II. THE DELUGE, . . . . . 22
III. THE LESSONS, . . . . . 30

MORIAH.

PART I. THE MOUNTAIN, . . . . . 45
II. THE TRIAL, . . . . . 48
III. THE IMPROVEMENT, . . . . . 58

HOREB.

PART I. THE MOUNTAIN, . . . . . 73
II. PORTAIT OF MOSES, . . . . . 78
III. THE BURNING BUSH, . . . . . 87

SINAI.

PART I. THE GIVING OF THE LAW, . . . . 98
II. THE PLOCLAMATIONS FROM SINAI, . . 106

HOR.

PART I. PASSAGE IN THE LIFE OF AARON, . . 122
II. THE DEATH OF THE HIGH PRIEST, . . 128
III. THE LESSONS FROM HOR, . . . . 137

## PISGAH.

PAGE
PART I. THE DEATH OF THE LAWGIVER, . . 152
II. THE LESSONS FROM PISGAH, . . . 157

## GILBOA.

PART I. PORTRAIT OF DAVID, . . . . 174
II. THE LESSONS FROM GILBOA, . . . 186

## CARMEL.

PART I. THE MOUNTAIN, . . . . . 206
II. THE SCENE ON CARMEL, . . . . 209
III. THE INSTRUCTIONS FROM CARMEL, . . 218

## TABOR.

PART I. THE SCENES ON TABOR, . . . . 235
II. THE TESTIMONIES OF TABOR, . . . 248

## OLIVET.

PART I. THE PRECURSORS OF THE AGONY, . . 267
II. THE NATURE AND CONCOMITANTS OF THE AGONY, . . . . . 274
III. THE CAUSES OF THE AGONY, . . . 283
IV. THE COUNSELS OF OLIVET, . . . . 291

## ZION.

PART I. THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD, . . 300
II. THE BEAUTIES OF THE ORDINANCE, . . 307
III. THE BLESSINGS OF THE ORDINANCE, . . 318

## ZION IN HEAVEN.

PART I. THE FUTURE STATE OF BLESSEDNESS, . . 328
II. THE PRIVILEGES OF HEAVEN, . . . 334
III. THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN, . . . . 345

THE

# MOUNTAINS OF THE BIBLE.

## INTRODUCTION.

ALL SCRIPTURE PROFITABLE—LANDS OF THE BIBLE INTERESTING—ITS MOUNTAINS INSTRUCTIVE—MORAL RESPONSIBILITY TO INDIVIDUAL ACTION.

Every pious mind admits the truth, and feels the preciousness of these words of Paul to Timothy,—"All scripture is given by inspiration of God." This is, indeed, one of the Bible's wonderful testimonies. It is also one of the Christian's "cities of refuge," into which he escapes from sceptical suggestions and unbelieving fears. He values it "more than gold, yea, than much fine gold," and uses it as a reproof to the pride of reason, as well as an encouragement to the work of faith. It is impossible to overvalue the great truth asserted in it. At the same time, in this verse of scripture, another very notable, though, by reason of its juxtaposition, not so very observable a doctrine, is emphatically stated, viz., that "all scripture is profitable." This would seem to follow as a corollary from the former, and so it does; for, if all scripture is inspired, then it must be all useful. But many are inattentive to this truth, and, in opposition to its exceedingly clear statement, they think and act as if some portions of

scripture were insignificant and required no searching. The consequence is, that by them many Bible gems are never discovered. Like the precious metals, these lie somewhat out of the way, and, to be found and appreciated, must be dug for in their own recesses, and brought out to the light by the hand of the diligent.

All scripture is profitable, though it may not be all of equal value to the interests of man as fallen and guilty. The chronicles of the kings of Israel are not so precious as the gospels of the evangelists, or the church history of Luke the "beloved physician." The proverbs of Solomon do not contribute so much to our spiritual instruction as the sermons of the Saviour and the Pauline epistles. Still, in their own places, as connected with the system of revealed truth, they are copious of wisdom, and well fitted to "furnish the man of God unto all good works." That indeed which is by way of eminence called "the gospel," is heard, more or less distinctly, throughout the inspired volume. Hence, when the people of God possessed but a small portion of scripture, they prized it as "a lamp to their feet and a light unto their path." Who can read the psalms of David without being convinced of this? Beyond the Pentateuch, and two or three of the books that immediately come after it, his department of the canon did not extend, and yet these were prized by him as more valuable than "thousands of gold and silver." What an interesting production is psalm cxix.! In it we have the royal poet's estimate of *his* Bible. And not only this, but from it we learn how mercifully adapted to man's spiritual necessities may be those portions of revelation which are not deemed so important as the subsequent additions to the canon. Even his little volume of God's word he found out to be "wonderful," and declared that meditation upon it

night and day made him "wiser than his enemies," and "gave him more understanding than all his teachers." It must be sinful, therefore, to under-rate what the Spirit of God has, in these recorded experiences of his child, so unequivocally commended.

In every respect, it must be owned, there is a great difference between God's holy Bible and man's publications. When knowledge increases, the latter, as authorities, may not only lose their value, but become injurious. But the former constitutes the "law of the Lord," which, *as a whole*, is "perfect," and in each of its particulars is without "spot or blemish." Besides, the worth of what is inspired lies not in mere jots or tittles, or words or sentences; these may be deciphered and understood, but they depend for their spiritual influence upon God himself. The planting of Paul and the watering of Apollos are necessary; but neither gives the increase. This cometh of Him who is the "author and finisher of our faith." When the scripture is effectual to conversion, it is because it has come to the sinner, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in "demonstration of the Spirit and of power." The Holy Ghost, however, is not dependent on particular portions of his word. As it all contains his mind, so he can make any portion of it serve the great end of its gift to man. The divine composer of the work saw the end from the beginning; and hence the gradual additions to the canon, while they diffused clearer knowledge, did not neutralize but confirm the original revelations. The earlier rays on the eastern horizon may be somewhat faint, but they come from the approaching orb of day. All scripture is therefore not only inspired, but must be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man

of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

With these impressions, we purpose to investigate and improve some portions of the Bible which are not very often made the subjects of pulpit discourse, nor of private study, but which are most interesting, nay, profitable, to the humble and believing reader. We propose to visit and ascend some of the mountains which scripture has immortalized, and which were once the scenes of wonderful events. As we draw near to these sublime monuments of nature, let us remember that they are also memorials of his majesty and mercy who is nature's Lord. When standing at their base, and listening to their solemn proclamations, let us employ the language of the spouse, and say, "The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills."

In the prosecution of our plan we must needs travel to the lands of the Bible,—and what other lands are invested with such deep and hallowed interest? Their marvellous stories are ever listened to with an attention, and remembered with a tenacity, which defy the influences of time. In the midst of the nineteenth century, Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, are alike eagerly resorted to by the curious and the pious. Grand may be the scenery and magnificent the cities of other countries, but what are their attractions in comparison with that enchanting influence wherewith the Holy Land directs so many hearts and eyes towards her hills and streams, her cities and plains? There is a somewhat mysterious agitation of the human mind in its mere fancies of the sublime and beautiful in the scenery of Syria. Few natures are so stolid as to remain unmoved when the waters of the

Jordan are forded, or the gardens of Canaan promenaded, or the heights of Zion scaled. This is the land of God! Here Jehovah visited his people, now with judgments, and then with mercies. It is the witness of his covenant, and the ark of his promises. Here holy men of God, wrapped in the mantles of inspiration, spake the secrets of heaven to astonished generations. Here Christianity was cradled in the types and bound up in the swaddling clothes of an initiatory dispensation. Here God made ready to assume the nature and atone for the sins of its people. This is the land of Jesus of Nazareth! Here he was born. Amid these vales, on these mountain sides, within the gates of these cities, on the banks of these rivers, or on the bosom of these seas, the incarnate Son of God lived and loved, prayed and wept, agonized and bled, died and was buried. Surely we may appropriate the beautiful words of Amos, and say of it, "The Lord of hosts is he that toucheth the land;" or, in the still more graphic words of Isaiah, "Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken, neither shall thy land be any more termed desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah and thy land Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married."

For such reasons, any of the lands of the Bible would merit, and richly repay, our devout meditations. At present we restrict ourselves to their Mountains, not only because with them are associated the most marvellous events and the most distinguished men of inspired history, but because they supply ample materials for enforcing upon our minds the noblest virtues and the most attractive graces of eminent piety. As to these things we may say truly, "there were giants in the earth in those days." To speak of the activity or of the self-denial of Christians in our times, com-

pared with the "might and mastery" of the men who spake and lived for God in the olden days, is to compare small things with great. We have need of counteractives to our conceit. There is a tendency in a reviving church, such as the church of Christ is at present, to take an overweening estimate of its sacrifices for God. We sometimes see her almost in a fit of ecstacy, and well nigh to clapping her hands for very joy, when she has done some excellent piece of liberality. Our tones of exultation would be lowered if we would come more close to the Bible examples and study them. And of these we find a copious supply on the mountains of the East. There is one lesson which, above all others, such a study is fitted to teach us, viz., that there is a moral obligation to individual action from which we cannot be relieved, if we would glorify God. The duty of devoting ourselves to God, is imposed not alone upon the church collectively, but upon the members of the church *individually.* It cannot fail to attract our notice in visiting the Bible Mountains, that the mighty things done upon or beside them, were done not by masses of men but by solitary men. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Aaron, David, Elijah, stand out conspicuously as illustrations of this great principle in Christian ethics, that every man, in his own place and generation, is bound to be a witness for the Lord, "that he is God." This obligation cleaves to man while he lives, and when he dies he will be made to feel, in the judgment, that he was not overlooked in the multitudes of men that went down with his era to the grave.

The importance of this great truth cannot be overestimated. This will appear if we think for a moment of the evils that result from its neglect. Wherever the sense of such obligation to individual moral action

is lost, there is a danger, if not a certainty, that by-and-by all fear of God and all benevolent sympathies will depart. Let but this anchor of personal responsibility be lifted, and this helm of personal regulation be cast away, and man becomes a moral wreck. That he is not more palpably so at present, is owing not to him, but to the restraints of Providence, and the influences of religious truths and examples. Place many men of apparently moral habitudes where pure examples have no existence, and where unmasked impiety has no aspect of singularity, and speedily they would come out in their genuine colors. As the unlovely bat or the wild beasts of the forest venture forth from their hiding-places only when darkness covers the earth, so would the baser passions of our nature then bound forth to luxuriate in the congenial gratifications of lust and lies.

Even as it is, we have daily to lament over the grievous loss to the best interests of man, and to the high cause of God, which general inattention to this cardinal principle occasions. Uninfluenced by it, man is doing nothing in the sphere in which he ought to be energetically working for the glory of his Creator. He is defrauding that great Being of the talents given to him. He is cheating society of the benefits which this personal responsibility binds him to dispense, and he is robbing the church of so much of the treasure which her Lord bequeathed. Ere long he becomes blind to all those splendid opportunities for doing good which are every now and then casting up in the course of his life; and ultimately you find him undoing all that God has done for him, and doing all that God for him would undo; obscuring, if not extinguishing, one by one, the very lights of reason within him, and preferring such darkness to the light of Christ, who is

"the light of the world." There he is, instead of working on behalf of the noblest of all causes, folding his hands to sleep, and, as far as he is concerned, allowing mankind to be lost in circumstances favorable to their salvation. Alas! that we cannot speak of such a character as an exception; as a rare and curious, though melancholy specimen of the disastrous effects of sin. He is the prevalent character of the age; and the sin of such moral lethargy is, to a painful extent, the sin of the church herself.

The moral idler!—melancholy spectacle! View him setting out for eternity! His talents, given him to use for God, are laid up in a napkin and hid in the earth. In the earth they lie. Symptoms of motion may appear upon the cerements within which he hath swathed them, but these arise from the process of corruption. View him in his progress! His capacities remain in the sepulchre where he entombed them, supplying food only to the insects that prey upon the remains of godly influence—that swell out the body of sin into the dropsy of death, and increase the malaria that ascend from the decomposition of the grave. View him at some of the great stations of his journey! He alone, out of many that are eagerly serving God, keeps his place; or if he be constrained for a moment to taste the air and look upon the activities and bustle around him, which have excited a little curiosity even in him, he quickly relapses, and as the Egyptian mummy, when subjected to the action of the atmosphere, crumbles into dust, so is the work of his moral dissolution quickened. Above all, view him on the brink of eternity! What a shock does the summons to die give him! He is aroused, for a time, from his spiritual apoplexy, and is now conscious that however busy he may have been in his dreams, he has

actually been doing nothing, either for himself or for others, and that he is standing at length on the threshold of judgment, a moral bankrupt. Not only so; he now makes the mortifying discovery, that while he has been doing nothing for, he has been doing everything against himself. He has been "all the day idle!" and now the night has set in, when he cannot work.

What a contrast have we to this character in the Christian, who is "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord!" Feeling that he is morally responsible for individual action, he is blessed and is a blessing. Upon himself this impression has the best effects. Its influence is electrical. He springs as from the dead; his bosom heaves; his limbs become supple; his hands, and eyes, and ears, his heart and soul, and mind, now "live, and move, and have their being" in God. He not only ceases to be idle, but he learns to do good, and to communicate. He becomes a second patriarch of Uz—eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the poor; yea, he has the same mind in him that was in Christ Jesus, and goes continually about doing good. And how happy all this makes him! Let those tell who thus spend their days.

But we must also consider the influence of such a character on all around him. He is a living rebuke to the idler, and a constant encouragement to the well-disposed. Like the sun, he diffuses light wherever he goes; like the morning breeze, he breathes health upon whatever he falls; like the genial spring, as he revolves, he imparts vitality and verdure; like the balmy summer, he beautifies, replenishes, and matures; like the golden autumn, he calls forth the reapers and gathers in the harvest; and, like the snowy winter, in his more zealous efforts to do good,

he dispels noxious vapors, and restores the salubrity of the atmosphere. In a word, having begun with the individual himself, it proceeds to the family; from the family to the circle of friends; from these to the neighborhood; and from that, onward to more distant and interesting spheres. What has been beautifully said of the influence of one generation, may be affirmed of the influence of one such man: "As every generation owes some part of its character to that which preceded it, so it imparts some portion of its own to that which follows it, and thus propagates the blessed and augmented influences of itself and all its predecessors."

Let it not be thought that this is an ideal character. Rare it may be, but not fanciful. Such is what man ought to be. He may have let down the standard of moral industry, and paralysed the capacities of moral authority; but God has done neither. The law from his Maker remains as it was: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This law the Gospel has established, not made void. In obedience to it, the illustrious men who figured upon these mountains, and their descendants according to the spirit, in subsequent ages, whether apostles, or confessors, or martyrs, or reformers, lived, and suffered, and died. The sense of their responsibility to individual action, made them, under God, what they became, and won for the cause of truth many immortal triumphs. From which we must infer, that if all church members, especially in these times, would but "drink into their spirit," and plant their feet in the prints of their steps, the cause of God would speedily make itself to be felt in every recess of idolatry, in every corner of the earth. It

shall be, when our estimates of duty are taken from such a position, that we shall feel ashamed of our present limited efforts. The church is by no means as yet fully alive to the sacrifices her Lord demands of her. In comparison with what she is certain as yet to do, she is now doing nothing. O that God would pour out upon her, patriarchal and prophetic faithfulness, apostolic zeal, pentecostal power, and primitive Christian love and union! "Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us!"

To exhibit this great principle, therefore, as it was embodied in the men whose memories the Bible has embalmed, and to excite to their holy fervor and magnanimous self-denial in promoting the interests of pure and undefiled religion, we would proceed to the Mountains which have been famous as the witnesses of their exploits, and the monuments of their individual exertions.

# MOUNT ARARAT,

AND

# THE LESSONS OF THE DELUGE.

## PART I.

### THE MOUNTAIN.

#### ITS TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL APPEARANCES.

In choosing from amongst the lands of the Bible the Mountains that have the grander associations with the movements of the Deity, it seems proper to begin with Ararat. But before we specially consider that fearful work of God, of which it is an everlasting monument, let us first of all contemplate its situation and natural appearance.

The Bible speaks of the "*mountains* of Ararat;"* but though the word be in the plural, there is only one mountain so called. This mountain, however, has two peaks, of greater and lesser altitude, and upon the highest of these it is understood the ark rested. Ararat rises in Armenia, a country in Asia, part of which is now called Turcomania, and the rest is included in Persia. Here are the celebrated rivers Euphrates, Tigris, Araxis, and Phasis. Some think that Ararat is only another name for Armenia; and, in the Vulgate, the ark is said to have rested not on the moun-

* Gen. viii. 4.

tains of Ararat, but of Armenia. Others contend that there is no special mountain of this name, but that it is applicable to the whole of that stupendous range known to the ancients as mount Taurus, which, beginning in the Lesser Asia, stretches as far as the East Indies. If the first opinion be correct, Ararat is then supposed to have been one of the range called the Gordiœan mountains, which are now the sources of the river Tigris. The ancients maintained this, and tell us that some remains of the ark were seen on that mountain so late as the days of Alexander the Great. It is certainly somewhat singular that in their immediate neighborhood is the town of Cemain, or Themana, (from the Hebrew word *shemen*, which signifies *eight*,) in allusion to the eight persons that were saved from the deluge, and that the very place where Noah and his family went out of the ark was distinguished by a name expressive of the event.

Travellers, ancient and modern, unite in describing Ararat, which forms the angle in this mountainous chain, as a truly sublime and stupendous object, exciting in the mind of the spectator both admiration and terror. Parrot, the Russian traveller, states its height to be 17,260 feet above the level of the sea. Thus it must be 6,389 feet higher than Etna, and above 1,500 feet higher than Mount Blanc, which is the most elevated point in Europe. The two peaks or cones of the mountain are called the Great and the Little Ararat. The smaller is separated from the greater by an immense plain; from it the snow disappears in summer; whereas, on the peak of the greater, the snow forever abides. Such an eminence must necessarily be seen from a vast distance—from 160 to 200 miles. Indeed, it is said to serve as a landmark to the navigators of the Caspian sea. We

may add, that the surrounding country abounds with traditionary stories about Noah's ark and the flood. "From Erivan," says the French traveller, Tavernier, "we went to Tauris (a fortress at the foot of mount Gordion,) which is a journey of ten days by the caravans—upon the second of which you pass through the plains in the sight of mount Ararat, which you leave on the south, and where there are a great many monasteries. The Armenians call that mountain Mesesoussar, because the ark of Noah was stopped there, when the waters of the flood abated. It is as it were separated from the other mountains of Armenia, which make a long chain or ridge, and from the middle to the top it is covered with snow. It exceeds the neighboring mountains in height; and the upper half of it is often hid in the clouds for the space of three and four months." Boulaye, again, another French writer, tells us that "Ararat is called *Ardagh*, by the Turks; and that it is the highest mountain in the world." Were we to credit the authorities quoted by the learned Saurin, we might occupy some time in referring to the Armenian traditions about the locality; but these we omit to attend to more interesting matter.

One of the great features of this mountain is the immense chasm which extends nearly half way down, over which impends a cliff, whose enormous masses of ice are from time to time precipitated into the abyss, with a noise resembling the loudest thunder. M. Morier says, "Nothing can be more beautiful than its shape; more awful than its height." Sir Robert Kerr Porter has furnished the following graphic picture of this magnificent work of nature:—"As the vale opened beneath us, in our descent, my whole attention became absorbed in the view before me—a vast

plain peopled with countless villages—the towers and spires of the churches of Eitchmai-adzen arising from amidst them—the glittering waters of the Araxis flowing through the fresh green vale, and the subordinate range of mountains skirting the base of the awful monument of the antediluvian world, it seemed to stand a stupendous link in the history of man, uniting the two races of men before and after the flood. But it was not until we had arrived upon the flat plain that I beheld Ararat in all its amplitude of grandeur. From the spot on which I stood it appeared as if the hugest mountains of the world had been piled upon each other to form this one sublime immensity of earth and rock and snow. The icy peaks of its double heads rose majestically into the clear and cloudless heaven—the sun blazed bright upon them, and the reflection sent forth a dazzling radiance equal to other suns. My eye, not able to rest for any length of time on the blending glory of its summits, wandered down the apparently interminable sides, till I could no longer trace their vast lines in the mists of the horizon; when an inexpressible impulse immediately carrying me upwards again, refixed my gaze on the awful glare of Ararat—and this bewildered sensibility of sight being answered by a similar feeling in the mind, for some moments I was lost in a strange suspension of the powers of thought."

Grand, however, and terrific as are the natural appearances of this mountain, the devout mind is much more apt to undergo a suspension of its powers of thought when meditating on that appalling judgment with which the inspired narrative has linked its history. The most intelligent travellers admit that though several attempts have been made to reach the top, that feat has never been achieved; for farther than the

snow limit, none have ever ascended. In the Bible, however, it is recorded that man was once on its dizzy heights—for on these the ark rested, and on these, for several weeks, Noah and his family must have remained. Moses informs us that it was not till the tenth month that the tops of other mountains were seen; whereas in the seventh month, three months previous, the top of Ararat was visible. This may aid us in forming some idea of its immense height—nearly three months additional elapsing before the waters subsided so far as to uncover the summits of other mountains. In studying the history of Ararat, therefore, we are led to inquire how it came to pass that what has ever since been an insurmountable barrier, was got over in the days of the patriarch; and that not only he, but his family, and a sample of all living creatures, lived for a considerable time amid a region where animal existence is now, and has always been, unknown? The answer to this inquiry opens up to us a large field of interesting truths, of which but a few can be noticed.

## PART II.

### THE DELUGE.

CAUSES NOT ALL NATURAL—ENTRANCE OF MORAL EVIL A MYSTERY—LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD—HIS PATIENCE HAS A LIMIT—DOOR OF THE ARK IS SHUT.

Passing by minute allusions to the deluge itself, I would lay it down, as an unassailable position, that such an event cannot be accounted for on *natural*

causes alone. It was not an ordinary overflow of the rivers—not an ordinary submerging of contiguous shores by the fulness of the ocean's tides—not an ordinary prolonged outpouring from the clouds of heaven—such superabundance of the waters has more than once, in different parts of the world, devastated large territories, and carried away multitudes of the human race. But the flood—"the shoreless ocean that, from the centre to the streaming poles, tumbled round the globe"—was altogether supernatural. The same book that tells us of the fact, reminds us also of the causes to which it must be traced. These causes may be described in one sense as natural, inasmuch as it was by the opening up of the fountains of the great deep, and of the "windows of heaven," that the deluge was brought upon the earth; but, in a moral or religious sense, it must be regarded as the doing of Jehovah, who, for good and sufficient reasons, after this manner determined well nigh to depopulate the world. Hence it is written, "Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth." Herein the divine glory is asserted. Again, "God looked upon the earth, and saw that it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them: and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Herein the connection between the flood and the existence of moral evil is emphatically stated, and not of extensive moral evil only, but of almost *universal* moral evil: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." These descriptions must be literally understood. Human nature, in itself, was not only universally depraved in all its

powers and faculties, but all the human beings then living were partakers of such depravity, excepting one family. What must have been the extent of a degeneracy, to correspond with such an account, and the judgment inflicted upon it, we cannot conceive. Bad as the world has often been since, and bad, after all, as it is still, it appears that the wickedness of man has never produced like enormities. It is nowhere recorded, nor does the history of the world justify us in conceiving that it could be truthfully recorded, that, excepting at that period, "God repented that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart."

It may here be asked, as it was in the power of God to prevent the existence, and, after the entrance, to restrain the progress of moral evil, so that such a judgment might not have been needed, why did he not do so? This is an old question of the free-thinker. Like all his questions, it proceeds on mistaken views of the divine character, and an unbelieving disregard of the divine word. As the fact of moral evil cannot be denied, the drift of such a question must be to charge the Deity as the author of sin. Now, that He should be so, is impossible, from God's own nature, which is essential holiness. Besides, it is opposed to the truth in reference to the origin of sin. Man was made perfect in holiness, and while master of his own will, and with the penalty of disobedience full before his mind, he transgressed the law. In the very moment of temptation his ability to resist was perfect, his holiness unimpaired, and God was beside him to assist him if he needed and asked assistance. But when he sinned, then God forsook him, because *he*, (not God,) but *he*, the *man*, originated sin. "No man can say, when he is tempted, I am

tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." In justifying God on the score of the existence of moral evil, an esteemed theologian has noticed the following things:—First, that it cannot be proved that he was obliged, either by justice or benevolence, to prevent sin from existing; and, secondly, it cannot be proved that the existence of sin will, in the end, be a detriment to the universe. "All moral beings," as he remarks, "are governed by motives only. What motives will, upon the whole, produce the greatest good, united with the least evil, to the intelligent kingdom, and how far the fall and punishment of some moral beings may, in the nature of the case, be essentially necessary to the preserving obedience of the great body, cannot be determined. But until this is done, and, indeed, many other things of great moment to the question, it can never be proved that the existence of moral evil is injurious to the universe, or the permission of it inconsistent with the most perfect good-will on the part of God." "At the same time," he adds, "I acknowledge myself utterly unable, and my complete conviction that all other men are unable to explain this subject, so as to give to an inquirer clear and satisfactory views by the light of reason, of the propriety of permitting the introduction of moral evil into the intelligent system."

It is much more becoming with our present partial knowledge, to be extremely chary in the agitation of such questions. A good purpose can scarcely be served by it, and much serious injury may be done to our own spiritual comfort. It is enough for us to feel that such evil exists, and that it exists in us. It is enough to know that we are to be charged with it, and that God is to be our judge. If we ply our mental energies diligently in attending to these

personal views of the matter, we will neither have time nor inclination to seek "to be wise above what is written;" for whoever has been so foolish as to commence such a search, has returned empty as to any additional information, but more guilty than before, in presuming to attempt the withdrawment of the veil which God has suspended over the incomprehensible doctrines of his word.

In reference to this serious subject, it is also the most useful plan to receive, with implicit faith, the plain statements of scripture, and to meditate on such portions of these as persuade us to return to God. The narrative under review supplies abundance of such encouragements. Whatever darkness rests upon the question of the entrance of sin, none whatever rests on the gracious determination of God to banish it from the world. In doing this he is sovereign; he can take any way that pleases him. He can clear the earth of sin by destroying sinners and casting them out of it, or by presenting them with those motives to obedience which allure them from their sins, or by employing so much of the first expedient, the destruction of some sinners in his awful indignation, that others may be impressed with the fear of sin, and with a desire to be made holy. This he did in the case of the deluge. He preserved one family to perpetuate the race, and he preserved the record of the flood to act as a beacon to future generations. Even, however, in pursuing this plan, Jehovah richly manifested his long-suffering and patience; for it ought to be remembered that the flood did not come unexpectedly on the inhabitants of the earth. To show his desire to save them from destruction, God appointed Noah to preach righteousness to them, not only all the time the ark was building, but for one hundred and twenty years previous to the

coming of the flood—time enough, surely, to allow the awful premonitions of the impending judgment to circulate round the earth. In reference to this, an apostle remarks, that "the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was preparing." Yes, for one hundred and twenty years before the flood came, Jehovah did strive with man; but, alas! without effect—the time expired, and the limit of divine patience was reached.

Yes, sinner!—unrepentant and unbelieving—even the patience of God has its limit; and though none of the menaces against your sins, to which you have often listened, be as yet accomplished, rest assured their accomplishment is certain. Peradventure you are deceived, by the mere circumstance of their delay, into the idea that they are either entirely withdrawn, or that they have never been anything else than bugbears of human begetting. Ah! not unlikely so reasoned and so thought those foolish men who lived in the immediate neighborhood of Noah when the ark was a-building. Daily they came to assist in its construction, and daily the patriarchal minister came to the ark, and exhorted them to forsake their sins, and worship God. Year after year did that good man plead with these bad men, but in vain. Each night, peradventure, as they retired to their houses, they would entertain their families with the old man's credulity, and many a laugh would be raised at his expense, till at length, in all probability, even derision would cease to be excited—the repetition of the same truths rather lulling to sleep than quickening to vigilance and prayer. But the hundred and twenty years expire, and Noah at last begins to embark. Just one week is allowed him to carry into the ark all his family, with birds, and beasts, and creeping things,

and provisions. It is melancholy to see how these same men assist him during every one of these seven days—often going into and out of the ark—still unalarmed—still ridiculing the fears of the fanatic preacher. On the evening of the seventh day, all are now within the massy fabric—Noah, his wife, his sons' wives, and the living creatures God had commanded him to take with him. For the last time, we may fancy these obstinate sinners in the act of retiring from the ark. Noah's heart is moved; and, it may be, he thus closes his ministry: "Stop, sinful, infatuated men!—stop for one moment—this is the last opportunity. I believe God to be sincere; and if you will even now repent, and remain in this ark, you will be saved; but if you take one step more from where you now stand, in scornful defiance of God's warnings, you are lost." The scorners consider this to be the crisis of the hoary preacher's madness; with a look of contempt, they descend and repair homewards, again to entertain their families with the last ridiculous eccentricities of their neighbor Noah. But, hark! what sound is that which strikes upon their ears? That is no usual sound—it goes through their hearts—their steps are arrested, and they turn and look behind them—what was it? It was the shutting of the door of the ark; not by Noah's, not by human hand, but by the hand of Jehovah; for it is written, "And the Lord shut him in." And now, (for the sacred narrative intimates as much,) the waters begin to flow and fall—the sun is darkened—the earth shakes, and the distant thunder rolls, while reverberating hills multiply manifold the roaring of the dread artillery of heaven. Forgetful now of everything but self-preservation, they flee in terror towards the ark, which but a little before they had insolently

quitted. They see that this is no ordinary rain, and they fear that, after all, Noah has been right. What a frightful simultaneous rush would then be to that singular building; but how much more awfully terrific would it become, when, as they all in distraction labor to scramble up its huge sides, one after the other falls into the accumulating waters, and all hope of that *shut door* re-opening dies within them! Away, away to the high places and the mountains they now, in the speed of despair, are hurried; but it is all in vain: in forty days the tops of the highest mountains, even Ararat's lofty pinnacles, are covered.

Sinners, unbelieving and impenitent, come and listen to the lessons of the deluge; for pointedly to you this Bible story speaks, and that with a pathos so melting that it might charm into hearing even the deaf adder. Indeed, not to restrict the improvement of this subject to you, were unfaithfulness on our part, greatly to be blamed. Something like this is to be realized in your own experience, if you continue to despise "the riches of God's long-suffering;" for it is written, "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

Receive, then, the lessons from Ararat!

# PART III.

## LESSONS OF ARARAT.

### JUDGMENTS ARE PREPARED FOR SCORNERS—A REFUGE IS PROVIDED FOR SINNERS.

I. JUDGMENTS ARE PREPARED FOR SCORNERS.—It is true, a universal flood shall not again sweep man from the face of the earth; for the Lord God hath said in his heart, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." But other and more tremendous judgments are in reserve for scorners. The deluge, appallingly comprehensive as it was of all temporal evil, did not exhaust God's deadly reservoirs of righteous vengeance. His mercies, kept for and dispensed among thousands, are as full as ever, and cannot be diminished; and that which he calls his "strange work" is, and must be, as completely at his command as if none of his "pestilences that walk in darkness" had ever spread the pall of death over the nations. "Judgments are prepared for scorners," says the preacher.

Who are the scorners? You, who live in unbelief, amid the light of the Gospel dispensation; you, who have the same love of sin—the same evil imaginations continually, that imprecated the wrath of God on the antediluvians; you are the scorners. And so are you, who sit from day to day at the table of God's

providential bounties, and, when you have eaten and are full, refuse to give thanks to Him who opens his hands liberally, and daily supplies all your wants—you, also, who sit from Sabbath to Sabbath at the Gospel table, and eye with indifference the bread of life which is thereon provided for you, and dash the cup of salvation from your very lips, instead of eating and drinking that your souls may live; you are the scorners. And so are you who, in obedience to a prevalent custom, qualify yourselves for an external admission into the membership of the church, and spend your days under the shelterless canopy of a nominal Christianity. Such, in short, are all, who not only are not converted, but refuse to be converted, preferring to live on amid a dogged adherence to the mere name, an obstinate dislike to the strict spirit, and a growing disrelish for the holiness of a pure and undefiled religion. Yes, all such are scorners; and though you may flatter yourselves that all is well, on the ground of the creditable opinions of your fellow-men; and though that arch-deceiver within you, your own heart, may endorse the world's short-sighted encomiums, and puff up your vanity with pitiful notions of your own worth; worthless, and worse than worthless, you still are, and must continue to be, while the inside of the platter is unpurified, and your hearts resemble the "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

If the rude and roaming savage of the woods, who has the law of God written in his heart, is, in the eye of that law, a scorner when he falls down to worship the graven image, or it may be the glorious sun—if the more civilised idolater, who will not understand by the things that are made, the eternal power and

Godhead of the Deity, be, in the judgment of God, without excuse—if he, too, be a scorner—or, if the polished preceptor of a Platonic philosophy, and the almost sublime exemplifier of a Socratic calmness in the view of death, be included by the revelation of God, among those who are in reality dead, having no faith, no well-founded hope, no thoroughly unselfish trust—among what class of scorners must you be ranged, and what measure of judgments must be in reserve for you, who have received the knowledge of the love of God, and yet cherish enmity towards him in your hearts; who have had Christ Jesus set forth as evidently crucified for you, and yet put him to an open shame, by lifting towards him the finger of scorn, while he stretches out to you those friendly hands that once were nailed for you on the accursed tree; who perhaps perpetuate the fickleness and blasphemy of the men of Judea, following him the one day, in the observance of a mere ordinance, with feigned hosannas, and on the next heaping upon him, in your cool and daring relapses into sin, the heartless execration, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

If, then, these descriptions of character come home to any of your consciences, let it be remembered that for all such scorners "judgments are prepared." What an awful revelation is this! Ponder it seriously. Judgments! what are these? The term is comprehensive of temporal disasters, spiritual distresses, and eternal torments. How common in these days are the first! Riches on all hands make to themselves wings and fly away. Ruin grimly sits where Fortune once gaily smiled. Family circles are invaded by disease and death, and Rachel weeps, refusing to be comforted, because her children are not. What are usually known as all "the ills of life," seem to be let

loose upon men; and what are these but the judgments of God? Then as to spiritual distresses! who is he who can analyse and exhibit them? Alas! they are among the deep things of human experience. Yet if, by the hand of God, the veil were withdrawn from even one solitary bosom writhing under their lash, the spectacle would appall us. We should see the mind's confusion in respect of its relationships to God and eternity—the heart's agony under the terror of impending wrath—the conscience rising in its fury to accuse and condemn, and the whole soul unsuccessfully struggling in the meshes of carnality, to rise from beneath the frowns of God's face and realize the joys of his salvation. Under these spiritual judgments, neither Bibles nor ordinances afford relief. They avail not to comfort the scorners! The light shines not into their souls. The waters refresh not their thirsty spirits—and even out of the cup of salvation they drink what seems to them gall and wormwood. The tidings which speak pardon and peace to others, only tantalize them the more, and throw them into unutterable grief. Yet "all these are but the beginning of sorrows." With respect to eternal torments, what shall we say? As yet they have not been known by you. Their infliction, however, is certain, if you die scorning. In that case, "a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation," from the Almighty, may now seize upon you; for the judgment which is as it were asleep to-day, may awaken to-morrow, and must awaken ere long. The truth is, such a judgment is not far from any scorner. It lieth always at his door, ready to do its work, when He gives the command who has "prepared" it.

Yes, scorners, such judgments are prepared for you —as really prepared for you, as salvation is prepared

for the lovers of God. They do not belong to what the world calls the chapter of accidents. Escape from them is impossible while you scorn. O, that you would take warning from your temporal and spiritual troubles, and flee from the wrath to come; for while escape from the former is certain, if you believe and repent now, the latter must be endured when once encountered, and endured throughout unending ages, repentance only aggravating the wo, and faith only deepening and darkening the despair of the soul!

And who has prepared such judgments? Ah! here is the thought that gives to the worm new power to gnaw, and to the fire new fuel to burn. God has prepared them. Though it be his "strange work," yet judgment is his work—the work of him who is the God of love and mercy—the God and Father of a Saviour who was often offered to you, and ever despised. His law, his justice, his holiness, ay, even his very loving-kindness, demand it of him that he exhibit to the universe his detestation of sin—especially of the sin of scorning his pardoning grace. Believe it, then, ye who now scorn. The wrath of God is coming—it is hastening towards you like a mighty flood! Yet but a few years, it may be days, and the fountains of his fury shall be opened, and you shall be swept into "the lake that burns with fire;" for thus it is written, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;" and again, "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest." Do you hear these scriptures with unconcerned minds? Then you resemble the men that lived in the days of Noah, who wholly disregarded the divine warnings; inferring, that as all things as yet continued as they were, the deluge

would never come, and that Noah's words were empty sounds.

These may be, and often are, very disagreeable intimations to unbelievers. But we dare not hide them from your view. Love to your souls, as well as faithfulness to the Redeemer, demand that we do "not shun to declare unto you all the counsel of God." To the ministers of the gospel, it is not certainly so agreeable to persuade men "by the terrors" as by "the mercies" of the Lord. Yet they know that the latter are never so likely to be prized and sought after as when the former have been honestly and affectionately proclaimed. Let us now, then, with grateful hearts, turn your attention to the second lesson from Ararat.

II. A REFUGE FROM JUDGMENTS IS PREPARED FOR SINNERS.—The antediluvians had the ark, and we may believe that room would have been provided for any that yielded to Noah's entreaties; but none of them repented, and none were saved. Sinners, you too have an ark—a new testament ark. God himself has built it for you, and there is room in it for you all. And what and where is that ark?

Jesus Christ and him crucified forms the ark into which you are invited to flee and be saved. If you know not where to find it, go to the gospel, for in it Jesus is evidently set forth as crucified for you. He, and he only, can "deliver you from the wrath to come." He is the eternal Son of God—God "equal with the Father." He is the Son of man, having taken the nature of the seed of Abraham into mysterious union with his divinity. He is the substitute of sinners, having taken their place in relation to the law and justice of God, and "made an end of sin" by the sacrifice of himself. He has lived a life of obedience to that law which sinners broke. He has borne the

punishment due to sin, though he "knew no sin." Every claim, therefore, whether of law or justice, he has fully satisfied in your stead, so that if you will only avail yourselves of his suretyship, and take refuge in his atonement, and be clothed in his righteousness, and become obedient to his commandments, then you are within the ark—the great, the capacious gospel ark; where, come whatever storm Jehovah may commission into our guilty world, you are certain to ride safely above the tumultuous waters, till you rest at last on the celestial mountains.

Why then will you not enter? Make known the reason of your backwardness. Say, does it arise from a fear that there is not room enough within for all that are invited, or that perhaps you are not included among them to whom the gracious offer is tendered? Not room enough in Christ! Banish the thought from your minds. One thing we know, there was room in him after sinners had been fleeing to him for four thousand years. This truth he himself taught us in his own beautiful parable of the great supper, to which all and sundry were invited; and after everything had been done precisely as he had commanded, the servant comes and tells the master of the house, "Yet there is room." In these striking words a glorious truth is revealed—that the Christian's ark is not yet fully tenanted; and as it is not likely soon to be, *you* are yet in time. Not only in Christ's "Father's house are many mansions" prepared for the saints, but Christ's own heart is all ready for the reception, in the first instance, of every sinner of mankind who will take shelter in it. An entrance must be actually made into his gospel invitation, to take possession of its promises—into his covenant, to take possession of its blood—and into his heart, to take

possession of its wonderful love. Not room enough in Christ!—the needed mansions not numerous enough in Christ!

> "Great God forbid that such a thought
> Should in your breasts be found!"

His love for you, sinners, is boundless as his own divinity, and could embrace innumerable worlds teeming with transgressors more guilty even than you. His atonement for sin is likewise infinite in its intrinsic value; it is absolutely impossible to drain away its precious blood, even though every sinner now on the face of the earth, or who may hereafter live, were to wash in it and be cleansed. Your own righteousness is filthy rags, but His righteousnees *is* righteousness; that is, it is righteousness indeed and in truth, because it is of sufficient excellence to screen you from the anger of God, and to hide your imperfections from his eye. Clothed in it you will, at death, find instant admission into God's presence, and be through all eternity entitled there to occupy a higher place even than the angels who kept their first estate.

But there is more than this to be attended to; for as there is plenty of room in this spiritual ark for you all, so it is equally true that you are all not only warranted to enter, but the commandment of God himself is your warrant. This is indisputable; for there cannot be any doubt that there must be, and that there is a sense in which the accommodation and the invitation to use it are equally extensive. All are asked to enter, just because there is room in this ark for all. Upon this delightful representation of the case, listen to the word of God in the following passages:—"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord, and not that he should return from his ways and live? I have no pleasure in the death of him that

dieth, saith the Lord, wherefore, turn yourselves and live ye." "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever" (God be thanked, there is a *whosoever* in the promise!) "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "This is a faithful (or true) saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And *whosoever* will, let him take of the water of life freely."

These are the words of the unchangeable Jehovah, and they are addressed to all sinners, without exception. Why then do any conclude that they are not warranted to accept of mercy? Upon what view of the subject can such doubts be defended? Gospel hearers, beware of *unbelief*. It may not seem to you to be so bad a thing as *infidelity;* notwithstanding, it may be to you as ruinous. A distinction may be formed between infidelity and unbelief, meaning by the first, the total rejection of revelation, and by the second, the tacit, if not avowed, acknowledgment of the gospel as a message of God, but the refusal to conclude that its offers of pardon extend to us, or that our sins have been atoned for by the death of Christ. Are you taking comfort from such a distinction as this? It is not safe. There is certainly no hope for the man who dies an infidel; but neither can there be any hope for him who dies in such unbelief of God's sincerity in the gospel call, and of Christ's sufficiency

as a propitiation, not only for our sins, "but also for the sins of the whole world." This is in reality infidelity, and something worse. There is here a tampering with the truth—an almost persuasion to be a Christian—a halt between two opinions—an admission of the truth of the gospel as a general remedy, combined with a rejection of it as not specially intended for you. There is one consideration upon which we might give way to such doubts. It is this:—Has any sinner, in any age of the world, and from among any people, gone to Christ, asked admission, and been dismissed, not alone on the score of want of room in him, but on any ground whatever? Many hard words have been uttered against our ark, brethren, but we have never yet heard such an accusation as this, and the reason is obvious. None ever sought admission there who were not admitted; consequently they could not return to tell any such doleful tale, as that they knocked at the door, and the door was not opened. Be assured, no such testimony can truthfully be borne against Christ; and if you wish to be joyfully convinced of this, go away to him and make the experiment for yourselves. Would God you would only do so; then our remonstrances with you should not be required! You would then have the witness within yourselves, that to receive instant welcome, you have only to ask it—to find pardon, you have only to seek it—to have the door opened, you have only to knock—to see that God is good, you have only to taste—to be saved, you have only to believe—to be strengthened for all the duties and temptations of this life, you have only to trust—to be comforted and made happy in your passage through tribulation, you have only to "fear no evil"—and to be glorified eternally, you have thereafter only to gather up your

feet into the bed, and, like Jacob, yield up the ghost.

Sinner, are you yet unconvinced of the necessity of repentance, and of faith towards Christ as your ark? What is this that stumbles you now? I see what it is. You are too proud to enter that ark—the cross is an offence to you. You cannot stoop to take it up. You will not suffer your carnal conceits to be sacrificed upon such a tree. You will risk some other experiment. You will take your chance of the Christian Noah that warned you, turning out a garrulous old fool—a babbler. You will wait awhile and see what the future produces. You will try the manufacture of some nice little ark of your own to escape to, if a storm should arise, and a flood should come. You will, even if it should come to the worst, get up to the top of some of your own mountains. Why not? they are your own property. Or to the high towers of your own Babels. Why not? do they not reach up into heaven? And if not from the Babel tops of your own good works, surely from the magnificent peak of some moral Ararat, you will have the good fortune to escape the terrors of the Lord, and appropriate salvation. Yea, and if all this should fail, you will, you think, have time enough, as a last resort, to flee unto, and experiment upon Jesus; and then surely all will be well! So thought, and so reasoned, let us suppose, some of the congregation of Noah. Regarding his predictions as the ravings of madness, they resisted his ministry till the flood came, and then they arose and fled to the ark; but the door was shut.

Brethren! realize the position and looks of the very last survivor of that wicked generation. Contemplate the last antediluvian man! Miserable being! he, too, had been at the building of the ark; and had

joined in ridiculing the prophet of the Lord. He remembers the sermons now—but a late memory is sometimes worse than a total oblivion; and so it is with him—it is too late. He must flee now to the house-tops, for the waters are rising—but safety is not there. He hies him away to the neighboring hills—but the waters are rising: safety is not there. He reaches at length the summit of the loftiest mountain near him, and he alone reaches it—every wicked man, except himself, has perished. He looks around—all is "ocean, into fearful tempest tossed." He looks above—but the dreadful eye of an angry God is fixed upon him from every cloud. He is alone too. He has seen wife, children, and friends sink in the mighty waters. He has heard the gurgling sounds—the dread requiem of his race, and he now occupies the only uncovered spot of the drowning globe. For one moment hope whispers to him that possibly the waters may not reach his lofty retreat—his eye is fixed on the angry tide that roars around him—now he fancies that that tide recedes, and a shout of joy breaks through the watery clouds—but another look undeceives him. Lo! the waters rise, and rise, and even now he is enveloped in their foaming spray. He is about to abandon himself to his fate—when, while casting his last look over the wide abyss, he sees, at a distance, a huge object tossed to and fro upon the waves, and evidently rapidly approaching him. It is the ark! Behold there that wondrous ship comes dashing on, erect and safe. It nears the last man—peradventure it may come so near that Noah may hear and admit him. Ah! vain imagination. It did approach him—very near indeed—so near that he could have touched it, when up into heaven rose the terrific cry of despair, as the next swelling surge

carried it far, far, out of his reach, and in the same moment engulphed him in its angry bosom! Ebb, ebb now, ye mighty tides—retire now, ye troubled waters; for the Lord God omnipotent has triumphed —your work is accomplished—the Deity is avenged.

Sinner! in the despairing efforts and ultimate destruction of the last antediluvian man, you may see depicted what, in a moral and religious sense, is certain to be your closing struggles, with an accusing conscience within you—an angry God above you—an appalling judgment-seat before you, and the ark of salvation appearing now to aggravate your misery, and now lost, lost forever to your view. Such, we say, is certain to be your end, if you will not now repent and believe and abide in Christ. Leave off this work to the last—let but the waters of Jordan begin to rise, and let the mental, the spiritual storm within you but begin to rage, and you will find it—yes; it is more than probable—it is almost certain—that you will find it too late to pray for an interest in him who is "as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." What a poor, desolate, solitary wretch you will be then; surrounded, it may be, by no Christian friends, and incapable, it is very likely, of deriving the slightest advantage even from the whole appliances of the gospel of God! You will, perhaps, in these circumstances, make a last effort to reach the ark—Christ—whom you at present despise. But it will be in vain. That door is shut—and if it be shut against you, so must also be the door of heaven. Ararat's peak was, and only could be, reached by Noah, in the ark; and you shall never dwell on the heights of mount Zion, unless you go thither "in Christ Jesus." "Behold, then, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

# MOUNT MORIAH,

AND

# THE VICTORIES OF FAITH.

Abraham was the most illustrious of the patriarchs. He lived about four hundred years after the deluge. There is reason to conclude that he was a partaker of the idolatry which universally prevailed. In the seventy-fifth year of his age he was "effectually called." Jehovah appeared to him, and commanded him to arise and leave his country and kindred, to go, the patriarch knew not where, but with a divine promise that of him God would yet make a great nation. At that time Abraham was childless. Some time after this, when he was sojourning in the plain of Moreh, the Lord appeared unto him, and repeated the promise of offspring, which was as yet unfulfilled. Years again elapsed, and Jehovah, for the third time, honored his servant with a revelation of his purposes. On this occasion, however, the very time of the child's birth was specified. That "set time" in due course arrived, and Isaac was born.

The faith of Abraham and Sarah, so long tried, was now rewarded. Within their humble tent they possessed him in whom the nations of the earth were to be blessed. The unchangeable God had assured them

of this, and they were relieved of fears about his future preservation. They would, no doubt, indulge the hope of enjoying his society during the closing years of their own pilgrimage. The children of other parents might die; Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, might die; but Isaac could not die, in childhood nor in youth. He was to live to be the father of a great people, more numerous than the stars of heaven. What endearing conversation, concerning such a child, would often pass between the aged couple! How natural that they should indulge in anticipations of his future greatness—his honored intercourses with God—his increasing opulence, and numerous descendants! To his education and improvement, in everything corresponding with these hopes, they would unceasingly devote their attention, and there can be no doubt of their success. In their eyes, Isaac would grow up a pattern of everything most estimable. They were, therefore, now at ease. The shades of evening were fast gathering around them. Isaac was twenty-five years of age—his father's hope and his mother's joy—and they looked ere long to be gathered to their people, leaving him to be the heir, not only of all their wealth, but of the exceeding precious promise that, in him and in his seed, nations yet unborn should be blessed.

The patriarch was now, and had for some time been, dwelling in Beersheba, where he "had planted a grove, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God." It is far from improbable that he was thus engaged when he was favored with another visit from Jehovah. But what could now be the object of this return of the Holy One? A long time had elapsed since they spake face to face. The fondest wish of the patriarch's heart had been gratified, and he

only waited his peaceful dismissal into rest. Through many severe trials he had passed. He might now calculate that, in the decline of life, "the days of his mourning were ended," and that he and his beloved Sarah would go down to the grave amid the regrets of their household, and the filial devotedness of Isaac. How sadly mistaken was this good man in his interpretations of a future Providence! At no period of life are even the children of God secured against its trying vicissitudes; and oft, when they have battled bravely through its storms, and thought they could foresee a calm passage into the desired haven, does the bitterest tempest of all arise, in the very midst of which, perhaps, their celestial inheritance is reached, only, however, over the previous shipwreck of worldly comforts and cherished temporal hopes. Thus the time came when Abraham was commanded to put Isaac to death on the mount Moriah. Let us contemplate for a little the mountain itself, where the scene referred to occurred.

# PART I.

## THE MOUNTAIN.

ACRA—ZION—MAHOMMEDAN CLAIMS—THE MOSQUE—MORIAH THE SITE OF THE THREE TEMPLES.

Possessed of none of the natural grandeurs of Ararat, there are yet some things peculiarly worthy of notice in the topography of Moriah. In ages long after the days of Abraham, it became the site of the

temple built by king Solomon. It does not appear, however, that in the patriarch's time there were any buildings either on it or near it. On the contrary, we learn that there was a thicket in the immediate neighborhood, where the ram was caught which was offered for a burnt-offering in the stead of Isaac. There was another hill beside it, called Acra, on which the city of Jebus was afterwards built; which Jebus came latterly to be called Jerusalem. But to convey a more distinct idea of the precise situation of mount Moriah, it may be noticed that Jerusalem was built on two hills, named Acra and Zion, the one confronting the other, while naturally lower down was Moriah, separated from them only by a broad valley; which valley was afterwards filled up by the Asmoneans, for the purpose of joining the city itself to the temple, which was built on Moriah. We are told that Solomon built a causeway from his palace on mount Zion to this temple on Moriah, which was of easy ascent and descent. This eminence lay to the north-east part of Jerusalem, and has been sometimes reckoned part of the hill of Zion.

The precise locality of the scene in the text has been disputed. The Samaritans contended that the trial of Abraham was upon their favorite mountain Gerizzim. Hence, Dr. Wilson, in his recent admirable work on the "Lands of the Bible," tells us that, when on his way from Jerusalem to Tiberias, he ascended Gerizzim, and was shown by his guides the place where, they said, Abraham offered up Isaac. On the same mountain the Samaritans had *their temple*, which was rival to that built by Solomon. The Mahommedans also contend that the site of their famous temple at Mecca was the scene of the patriarch's trial, but they naturally substitute Ishmael for Isaac. It

certainly must be looked upon as somewhat singular, that Samaritans, Jews, and Mahommedans, should all fix upon the sites of their temples as having been the scene of this interesting event. Moriah, however, was neither at Gerizzim nor Mecca, but beside mounts Zion and Acra, upon which, in latter days, the holy city was built—even Jerusalem, "the city of the great king." That the temple was built on it we learn from second Chronicles, third chapter and first verse, where it is said, "Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite." When the temple was reared, the ark of the testimony was removed thither from its place on mount Zion; and when this magnificent structure was, four hundred years afterwards, destroyed by the Babylonians, the second temple was erected by Zerubbabel on the same site. When again this edifice was plundered by Antiochus Epiphanes, the third was reared and beautified by Herod, where the former ones had stood; and, ever since the Roman soldiers under Titus, according to our Lord's prediction, completely demolished the third, the place has been regarded as one of very singular interest by the succeeding governors of the land of Syria. At this moment, Moriah, the scene of Abraham's offering up of his son, and the site of the three successive temples, is occupied by a splendid Moslem mosque, the renowned Sakara, built by the caliph Omar. At present both Moriah and Acra are scarcely discernible as elevations on the platform where Jerusalem stands. This arises, probably, from the gradual filling up of the interjacent valleys. Except at mount Zion, which is the elevated termination of that platform towards

the south, the general level of the site is below that of the immediately surrounding country; though, considering that it is not very distant from the sea, its positive elevation above the sea-level is considerable.

Let us now meditate for awhile on the sublime associations of Moriah with the faith of the patriarch, and the movements of the Deity.

## PART II.

### THE TRIAL OF THE PATRIARCH ON MORIAH!

A TRIAL OF NATURAL AFFECTION—OF FAITH—OF PATIENCE AND FORTITUDE — THE SPLENDID EFFECTS OF GENUINE PIETY.

In shortly reviewing the nature and extent of the trial to which, on Moriah, Abraham was subjected, we notice,

I. It was a trial of his natural affection.—Abraham was rich in flocks and herds, and would have been ready, we cannot doubt, to have sacrificed them all at the command of God. He was rich also in man-servants and maid-servants, and if it had been enjoined on him, he would have offered any one of them, though it might be with painful emotions. He was fortunate, too, in having Eliezer of Damascus as the steward of his house, and him he would not have hesitated to sacrifice. He had, besides, another son, Ishmael, whom he tenderly loved, and even Ishmael he would not have withheld. But, everything considered, natural affection was more awfully tested by

the order from heaven to go and sacrifice Isaac, his only son—the son whom he loved with a very peculiar and intense affection. And if he *so* loved this child, God himself had taught him to do it, by making him wait so long for his birth, and by associating with his future history the glory of his house. And what is it that God requires him to do? When first the voice reaches his ear, he is ready to hear and obey. It concerns Isaac, and perhaps the thought would suggest itself that now somewhat of the future eminence of his son was to be communicated. Visions of earthly splendor might pass before his mind, and the parental pride might even then be gratified by anticipating for him the obeisance of surrounding kingdoms. "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah." The patriarch might already have realized the separation of Isaac from himself at some future period, and indulged the fond hope that, if this should be the will of God, the distance between them might be such as to admit of their occasional fellowship. How delightful to him, then, under such impressions, to hear that Moriah was the place to which they were to repair—only three days' journey from Beersheba! But the reaction on the parental heart must have been dreadful beyond description, when the closing words fell upon his ear, —"and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

II. It was a trial of his faith.—Isaac was not only his son, but the son of promise, and Abraham was already in possession of assurances from God himself that this very child would become the father of a great people. Herein, then, lay a trial of faith. He believed God's word, and yet he must act in direct opposition to what to reason appeared subversive of

that word. He believed that Isaac would become everything God had predicted he should be. He believed God to be sincere in all his promises concerning that son. He believed at the same time that this son he must put to death, and that within three days. This he believed he would do, and had no idea that the divine mandate should be recalled as it ultimately was, nor even that Isaac should be restored to life after the sacrifice. This was just as severe a trial as faith could possibly be subjected to, and fit to be placed beside the temptation to natural affection of which we have spoken. "Now faith," we are told, "is the substance of things hoped for." How, then, was this element of faith tested here? "The things hoped for" by Abraham were, Isaac's prosperity and Isaac's posterity. These things were substantially before him in the life of his son, and in the inward persuasion or faith that that life would not be destroyed, and though destroyed, would yet be the productive cause of these expected blessings in a way and manner unknown in that case to him, but perfectly well known to that God whose word was pledged for it. But faith is also "the evidence of things not seen;" and how was this element tested in the crucible of this trial? Thus, the things not seen by the patriarch were the future fortunes of Isaac, and God's mode of unravelling the present mystery. Accordingly, his conviction that such fortunes were safe in God's hands, and would be accomplished in God's time, was as good to him in the way of enjoyment, as if these invisible things had started into existence before his eyes. His faith was to him in the stead of actual substance, and as confirmatory of the existence of such a substance, as if the evidence of sight had been added to the testimony of faith. Still, it must be repeated, to his faith this

was a most dreadful trial. Never before had God so experimented upon the confidence of any son of Adam, and never before had God been so greatly glorified by the immovable adherence of that confidence in his immaculate veracity.

III. It was a trial of his patience and fortitude.—When the human mind is called on to submit to some painful sacrifice, either of affection or faith, there is a strong desire to have the trial quickly over. Between the purpose formed, and the purpose executed, there is sometimes more real agony endured than in actual suffering,—

> "The fears of fancy are most terrible;
> But when the apprehended misery comes,
> The spirit smiles to feel how bearable
> The heaviest stroke of heaven."

Hence it is possible that the spirit of a man, which would sustain him under the infliction of an evil, would utterly break down in the interval, were it prolonged, during which he must brood in misery over his anticipated struggles. True heroism in war consists in the calm and unfaltering march of the veteran to the cannon's mouth. All that follows this is but the desperate energy of an unbridled natural instinct, intensely bent on the preservation of one life by the sacrifice of many. True martyrdom is not exemplified in the composed resignation of life at the block, or in the fire, but in the silent and cheerful endurance of the intermediate contests with flesh and blood, and of the invariable peril to life and liberty to which the confessor is every moment conscious that he is exposed. Whatever follows this, is but the gentle lapse into sleep of a child of heaven on the bosom of truth. Now this was eminently the case with the father of

the faithful in this trial. The instruction was, not to put Isaac to death immediately, but in three days hence; not in the tent, or in the grove at Beersheba, but in the land of Moriah; not in the presence of his people, to whom the divine request might be made known and explained, and who might maintain his purpose of obedience by their acquiescence, but alone—alone on the top of the mountain with the beloved and lovely victim.

What heart does not throb with emotion as it follows that father on such a journey! Let us picture to our minds the family of the patriarch assembled that night for the worship of God,—Abraham presides, Sarah sits beside him, and before him were Isaac and the household. The father's eye is fixed on the sacred boy—the child of a divine promise. He believes that this happy domestic circle is soon to be diminished, and that never again in the praises of God shall that melodious voice of Isaac be heard within that humble tent, the scene of his birth, the witness of his childhood's prattle and play, and the sanctuary of all the mother's fondest, of all the father's deepest sympathies. There is no tremulousness in the voice, no change in the countenance, no tear in the eye, by which either mother or son or servant could discover the welling emotions of his heart. They retire to rest. He sees the mother embrace her son, as he thinks, for the last time, but still he commands himself, and keeps at once his secret and his spirit under. The morn dawns; the patriarch rises with the sun; he calmly makes provision for the sacrifice on Moriah, and summons Isaac and two servants to follow. As he quits the tent, is he tempted to divulge the truth to the mother, and afford her a last opportunity of folding that dear son in her arms? No; he never thinks of it. This

would be placing too much of nature in the road of faith, and he might stagger in his purpose. He is quiet, collected, and unimpassioned. Why? He has got work to do which the great God who brought him from Ur of the Chaldees, gave him to do: and what was he that he should delay? It is God's work! He holds on his way, sometimes walking alone, and sometimes with Isaac at his side; nature working, as it ought, in solemn seriousness, and faith working, as it ought, in perfect control of nature.

But the sun is now setting, and the twilight casts its sombre shade over the plain. They pitch their tent, and after the usual evening devotion, retire to rest. Thus also passed the second day of their travel; and on the third "Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off." He takes the wood of the burnt-offering; he lays it on his son; he takes the fire and the knife; and leaving the two servants behind, they go together to Moriah. For awhile they are silent. They converse at length. The obedient son, confiding hitherto in his parent's superior wisdom and piety, proposes a question which, in the circumstances, is replete with a pathos unparalleled: "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father; and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" Many a sportive lamb from the fold at Beersheba had the pious Isaac brought to his father's altar, and stood by and witnessed the patriarch priest shed its blood; but here was wood, and there was fire, but where the lamb? This question appears to be the *crisis* in the trial of natural affection, and now, if ever, will the weakness of the man give way before the yearnings of the parent. It is not so. How calm the reply as they move on to the mount: "My son,

God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering!" So, this struggle over, they both went on together. They gain the hill, they come to the very place, and in a short space of time an altar is reared, Isaac looking on, and wondering where God's lamb was to be found. His father approaches him, stretches forth his hands, and forthwith proceeds to bind him as the sacrifice. Isaac submits in silence. This he could easily have resisted. Abraham was an old man, one hundred and twenty-five years old; the son was in the prime and vigor of life, only twenty-five; but the one was as willing as the other. Nothing so finely demonstrates this as the circumstance that Isaac was laid *alive* upon the altar. It was the invariable custom to slay the animal first, and then, when dead, to place it on the altar to be burnt. But had Abraham done this, his strength might not have been equal, to lift up the dead body of his son. To relieve and assist the father, the son censents to be bound alive, and when stretched upon the altar, awaits the fall of the fatal knife. This appears to be the *crisis* in the trial of faith. If that weapon is plunged into this bosom, heaving with young life, how is it possible even for God to make that dead body fruitful? Where shall another Isaac be found? The father's faith in God, however, equals the son's resignation to God; he bares his arm; takes the knife; raises it; and in another moment the blood of the son of promise would have purpled the green sod of Moriah. But the trial was past; natural affection had been subdued; faith and patience had had their perfect work; God had been obeyed; the spirituality of the patriarch had been greatly increased in the furnace; and one of the most magnificent illustrations of the power of faith had been given, for an example to all coming generations.

Abraham believes and obeys; Isaac submits and lives; and God is glorified.

Behold, then, in all this, how true piety contributes to enlighten and empower the human mind! That the patriarch was possessed of a superior intellect, is clear from the above illustrations. It is true, his past life had been but ill adapted to what is called the cultivation of the mental faculties. He was an Hebrew; that is, a wanderer. He had little or no intercourse with men above or equal to himself. In that rude age of the world, neither art nor science could have engaged his attention, so as to multiply his stores of wisdom, or quicken his powers of reflection. Still, he was a man enriched with the substance and fertility of such sanctified intelligence as has not, we may venture to affirm, been paralleled in human biography. The human passions, even in the most civilized condition, are difficult of control; and the power of sense is the very last of our natural endowments that submits to the dictates of reason and the requirements of religion. Few men, though educated in the morals of a developed Christianity, in entering the lists with those severities and sacrifices of life which crave so much conflict in "the hidden part," have been able so to embody in their life the first principles of religion, as to demonstrate the supremacy of divine faith over human failings. But Abraham did this. His mind had much innate power, because it lived up in that pure region where habitual intercourse with God can alone be maintained. This was the secret of his intellectual excellence. His companion was God. His study was God. His aim was conformity to God. His object always and everywhere was the glory of God. Consequently he grew in that knowledge of God, which is the true and only process by which he

attained to his eminence as a man of mind, as well as a man of faith. There is, indeed, no process through which the human understanding can be carried, so absolutely certain to refine and exalt its faculties, as such communion with Jehovah. Here it dwells in light; meditates on truth; acquires power; imbibes purity, and grasps perfection. Apart from the unsettled elements of an inferior scholarship, its elasticity is undepressed by the damps of this humid clime, its penetration is undisturbed by falsities in principle or errors in reasoning, and its solid improvement is safely insured by a rapid and animating discovery of new and astonishing truths. We are apt to think that the inhabitants of an infant world, destitute of the advantages which now quicken the mind and endow it with the treasures of a more matured age, are greatly to be pitied, as having occupied a lower platform, and served an inferior purpose in creation. This, in a most important respect, is a grievous misapprehension. Consider Abraham! Born and living all his days in an era unenlightened by knowledge, and rendered still more dark by idolatry, and not possessed of any one of those helps to mental culture upon which men now plume themselves, and say, was there ever among men any mere intellectual stature that equalled his—any conceptions of the Supreme Being more truthful or comprehensive—any mastery of the human passions so perfect—any achievements of spirit over matter, faith over sense, or reason over superstition, that can at all match with his? And yet, he had no companionships; no competitors; no inducements beyond the circle of his own tents, and the precincts of his own altar grounds; no Bibles; no priests; no ordinances, such as we have! What value should not this teach us to set on the life of fellowship with God!

Restricted to this, we may lack the phylacteries and coronets of modern philosophies; but, possessed of this, we shall secure our own gradual assimilation to the image of God, which is knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Let no man, then, despise the opportunities and privileges of true piety, as if these alone could not fit him to take his place, and act his part, among the most illustrious of his race. Let but these be conscientiously improved by him, and he will speedily be as far removed, in respect of true greatness, from the possessors of mere earthly wisdom, as are the angels of God from the blundering astrologers of time. In a word, the human mind can be "thoroughly furnished unto every good work" of piety towards God, and of benevolence towards man; can be wrought up to meet, to battle with, and master, all the difficulties of this life; can be educated for joining the association of the highest order of intelligent beings; can be prepared to meet God in judgment, and to serve God through all eternity, by a devout and habitual intercourse with God himself, and God alone. This we say, not to deprecate human learning, or decry earthly science, but simply to recommend the life of religion, and exalt the science of faith.

# PART III.

## THE SCENE ON MORIAH IMPROVED.

### GOD IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY—MAN ON HIS TRIALS—FAITH AT HER PROPER WORK BETWEEN THEM.

I. THE SCENE INVITES US TO CONTEMPLATE GOD IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY.—That God is sovereign, is apparent in all his intercourse with Abraham, from the day that he gave him command to depart from his native country. This call was made irrespective of any wish or claim of the patriarch himself. Out of all that generation of men, it may be asked, why was Abraham selected? And why was it not Terah, the father, rather than Abraham, the son? Or why was it not from a former, or why not from a succeeding generation, that one was chosen to become an instrument in God's hands for working out God's mysterious work? Questions such as these are endless, and but one satisfactory answer can be given to them: God is sovereign. He has a right to do what pleases him anywhere and everywhere. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." This exercise of sovereign authority is quite manifest in what may be called God's general management of the affairs of all his creatures and their works; and to this absolute exercise of power, whether it be in the creation or destruction of nature, in the punishment or pardon of sin, in the selection of men or the abandonment of devils, no intelligent creature of God ought to object. Being creatures, we have no title to question God on any matter; and being sinners, we should not seek to be wise above what is written. Our confidence

should be this: that the Judge of all the earth must do what is right, whether we perceive it or not; and, if we find it not only expressed in scripture, but repeated emphatically in Providence, and, in fact, re-echoed throughout human experience, that God has *electing* decrees by which he is guided in his gracious dealings with our race, we are bound to believe it, though we cannot reconcile it with what, after all, may on our part be very erroneous principles of reasoning. Abraham is a beautiful specimen of this humble submission of the mind to revelation. God commanded him to expatriate himself; and thus it is written—how simple, yet how impressive the narrative!—"So Abraham departed." God promised to give him a son by Sarah, who was barren; years passed away, he and Sarah became old and infirm, and no son was born. The arrangement might not be very satisfactory to them, and the delay in fulfilling the promise might seem wanton and unnecessary; but Abraham waited on the Lord, confident that all was well considered, that all would be rightly adjusted at the last; and it was so. That son of promise was born, and grew up to manhood. But what next? God commanded the father to put him to death. Abraham rose on the instant to do it, though a more stunning injunction was never offered to the submission of a rational being. It is all one, however, to the patriarch. "God is sovereign; he has a right to command; I have no right to question. *Do* what he bids, in defiance of my feelings, of my light, of God's own express declaration, I must and will, leaving consequences to him who supports his throne on righteousness and judgment, though it may be overshadowed by clouds and darkness." And such, brethren, is the use we all ought to make of this doctrine of the divine

sovereignty. No creature ought to suppose it possible that God can do or be wrong, whatever be his doings or sayings. "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

But, though God is sovereign, it does not follow that he ever acts, or can act, in any way inconsistently with his absolute perfections. He not only can do what he pleases, but he is never pleased to do anything but what is right. All his attributes act in perfect harmony; and hence all his words to, or dealings with, his creatures, are so beautifully compacted together, and so nicely balanced, that no dissonant note is ever heard among his decrees, and no antagonism ever introduced to occasion conflict among his handiworks. It does not please him to show us, at present, all the various links of the chain which so connects his numerous dispensations, either in nature or grace, as to produce systematic and combined results. We are certainly kept in the dark; and for this he has, no doubt, the best of reasons. Who would wish it otherwise, when God has wished it so? And if men would but curb their curiosity, and restrain their impatience but for a little time, they would find that, in the end, God's processes with them are altogether just and merciful. To many, for instance, it is mysterious how God should so long delay the fulfilment of his promises. They cower down beneath the clouds of his Providence, timid and distrustful, saying, "Are his mercies clean gone? Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious?" Now, we should remember, that not only does God promise, but he determines when to fulfil; and every promise of his receives its accomplishment at the very moment and in the very way he has fixed. He righteously keeps the matter, and as punctually the time, of all his engagements. Delay with God is neither to be accounted loss of honor nor of memory.

He is not "slack concerning his promises, as some men count slackness," but the word of the Lord endureth forever. His promise is always and honorably kept, even when, as appears to us, he is literally breaking it to pieces. The patriarch might be astonished when he was required to sacrifice his Isaac; but he had faith within him, and God had honor and majesty before him; so Isaac lived, and God's veracity remained intact. Now, we should judge of all his actions by this one. It is recorded that we might have faith and consolation in the midst of our darkest and severest providences. Rest assured, God is always right. He is doing you no wrong. He is forgetting no promise. He is accomplishing just decrees. He is working out at once his own ends and your own welfare; and if we are to accommodate our feelings, in times of trouble, to his express declarations on this subject, then we may never be so confident of a remarkable manifestation of divine power and love, as when all is getting dark above our heads, and the whole framework of our earthly and spiritual comforts threatens to dissolve. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity;" and such opportunities he knows best when, in every man's history, to employ for commanding deliverances to Jacob.

> "The mount of danger is the place
> Where you shall see surprising grace."

II. THE SCENE INVITES US TO CONTEMPLATE MAN ON HIS TRIAL.—The intelligent creatures of God are, and must be, in an important sense, *continually on trial.* The angels are tried in heaven. There must be some principle on which their obedience to God is tested and demonstrated. Our first parents were tried in Paradise; and though the condition of mankind

has, in consequence of their fall, undergone material changes, the original constitution of things remains the same; the creature is still under trial, and it is still by his Creator that he is tried. His allegiance is tried by the requirements of the divine law, and his nature is tried by the inflictions of the divine rod. Our subject, however, calls rather to the consideration of man tried by severe affliction, in the endurance of which his corrupt nature is tempted, while his resignation to the divine will is put to the proof. Trials of this description are not essential to the manifestation of our submission to the divine law. They are contingent upon a state of insubordination to that law, and are superadded to the former, because the law has been broken, and that the law may again be "made honorable." It is in this view that all trials among men in general should be considered, and especially the trials of those who by grace are the believing children of the Most High.

Believers are God's children by adoption. Hence their Father, to prosecute the ends of their adoption, sees it necessary to administer the rod to them; not willingly, that is, not from any wanton delight in their suffering, but from a constraining love of their spiritual wellbeing, which, it is apparent, imperiously requires this mode of treatment. If they could do without it, or if there were some better way by which their natures could be improved, we may rest assured that no tribulations would be mingled with the lot of the righteous; hence we are expressly told, that "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

All this is forcibly illustrated in the trials of

Abraham. He was chosen of God to walk with God. He was a remarkably good man; and the most honorable title that can be conferred on any being, however exalted in rank, was first given to him—Jehovah condescended to call him his FRIEND. Who, then, so likely, so certain, as the friend of God, to be saved from the trials afflictive to human nature? And yet, after all, no other man was ever so severely tried. Hence, we may infer, that no degree of intimacy with the divine Being; no amount of his friendship, however largely it may be enjoyed; no attainments in grace and godliness, however many and bright, render trials unnecessary, or diminish the probability of our present exposure to them.

The spectacle of a good man enduring his afflictions is truly sublime. His temptations must be regarded as the temptations of the Holy One of Israel; for it is said, "God did tempt Abraham." They must be connected with the mysterious revolutions of a universal Providence, by which all things are made to "work together for good to them that love God." The apostle says, "*all things*." How comprehensive! Things remote as to time and place, and things at hand; things above, and things below; things brilliant with the smiles, and dazzling with the sunshine of Jehovah's countenance, as well as things blackened with the shade of his frown; things that make the mountains and caverns vocal with their thunder, and things that breathe out their whispers in the ear of silence; things that receive the loud applause of heaven, and things that call down the satire and contempt of earth; things that appear to be all in musical harmony with one another, and things that torture the mind with their screeching dissonance; things that bless, and things that curse; things of God, and things

of man; things of heaven, and things of hell; all these things, and every other thing, we are bound to associate together, as forming a magnificent and successful order of means—not acting apart, independent of one another, but all working together—all in unison, and the entire influence of their gigantic co-operation bearing directly, minutely, and perpetually, on the good of all and of each of the lovers of God. To him, then, who has spirituality enough to realize a good man undergoing such a process, up to the very article of death, no more imposing moral spectacle can be exhibited. The history of such a man, indeed, is next thing to a narrative of miracles, which, when attentively perused, appear in the three following views of God's probationer:—

1. That man, sinful and weak, should ever encounter God upon any arena, without being at once and forever crushed like a moth, is somewhat incomprehensible. The difficulty is increased when we consider that God's intercourses with man must now demonstrate his indignation at sin, and his purpose to punish it. It is true, all this is easily accounted for, now that the atonement has been made and accepted of; still, even in the case of the believer, it is not without a great share of the marvellous. He, too, all justified as he is, and greatly beloved of God, for Christ's sake, is often carried into the deep sea of trouble, and all the billows of God pass over him: yet is he not destroyed. His life remains in him, and, what is more astonishing, his religion remains in him. He may be in Egyptian dungeons; he may be stretched out in the den of lions; he may be cast into the fiery furnace; he may be hunted like a partridge on the mountains; he may have for enemies those of his own kindred; he may live to see his children swept into

the eternal world, perhaps unprepared for judgment; and, ere he himself dies, he who was once clothed in purple, may be begging in rags. But still he is found enduring, still praising, still content, still hopeful; and never for one moment disposed to yield to the temptation of Satan, to "curse God and die." In all this, we see a short-sighted sinful creature, whom the breath of God's mouth could in a moment annihilate, supported amid trials before which the vaunting moralist, and the cold-hearted stoic, are carried away like chaff. Clothed in the whole armor of God, the believer "*stands* in the evil day;" and, having done all, he still *stands*. This, we say, is not only a marvellous, but a miraculous thing.

2. Nor does the marvel diminish as we follow God's probationer in his steady progress through his trial. A tolerable amount of natural fortitude may sustain a man's spirit during a severe but short conflict. The most authentic records of suffering, however, present us with few specimens either of peaceful and sustained acquiescence in the prolongation of misfortune, or of a corresponding refinement and elevation of those peculiar natural feelings which are so prone to degenerate under the shades of adversity. You see this, however, in the saint as he passes through the conflicts of this life. Sometimes so dreadful is the tempest, that the frail bark of his mortality, with its precious cargo of faith, hope, and love, shudders from end to end, and remains immovable in the waters; but the stop is only for an instant, and onwards still it pushes to the desired haven. Sometimes that bark is driven to and fro during many a lowering day, and many a starless night; against its fragile form the furious breakers are dashed, and rocks and sands menace it with speedy destruction? but it is all one to that

mysterious little vessel—onward still it moves! It bears a charmed existence! It is insured in the covenant books of Him whom winds and waves obey. It is chartered for the shores of Paradise, and never veers nor tacks till the port is reached at which the voyage terminates, and the debarking begins. In short, every saint continues to believe, to love, to work, in all weathers, and to make spiritual progress under the most severe inflictions of his Father's rod. Yea, the more copiously the afflictive elements are poured into his cup, the more is added to his heavenly mindedness, and the sooner is he ready to take possession of his inheritance. On natural or rational principles, this is an unintelligible result, and can only be accounted for by referring all the probationary experiences to the rod, and all his support to the staff, of the "Lord, our shepherd."

3. But the greatest wonder of all in the trial of the saint is, their peculiar termination. Whatever be their number, nature, or length, their end is perfect purity and peace. These are the legitimate and necessary fruits of affliction. "For our light affliction," says Paul, "which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." What astonishing contrasts are there in this sublime text, which, when put together, greatly aid us to comprehend its treasures of consolation. First, there is affliction, then glory set over against it; next, there is "light affliction," then "an exceeding weight of glory" set over against it; and lastly, there is "affliction for a moment," then an eternal glory set over against it! Such a view of this passage, while it opens up a fountain of comfort to us during our affliction, casts a flood of light upon the magnificent winding up of sanctified probationship. No wonder,

though with such views, the apostle exclaimed, "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us!" Only contemplate all your trials, brethren, in this light, and you will feel their burdens to be lessened. Who would not suffer, since suffering is one of the buds from which glory is to burst? Who would not weep, since a tear is one of the drops from which shall flow and be expanded one of the rivers of God's pleasure? Who would not groan beneath this load of clay, since the sigh of the prisoner is to become one of the songs in the symphony of heaven? Who would not hunger and thirst, since these appetites are the future channels through which the life which is hid with Christ in God is to be consummately enjoyed? Who would not sacrifice his dearest treasures,—his very Isaac,—since the blood of our victims, and the incense of our altars, are all graciously to issue in the complete reproduction of whatever we have given to God, and in the final possession of all we have hoped for? Who would not sicken and languish during days and years of weariness, when disease is to be the medicine by which the precious soul is to be restored to spiritual health? And who would not die, when life and immortality are to be reached through death and the grave?

The scene invites us to contemplate,

III. Faith at her proper work between God in his sovereignty, and man on his trial.—The doctrine of divine sovereignty is, in many views, an appalling one, especially to guilty men; and this mysterious mode of perfecting pardoned sinners, by placing them in a state of afflictive probation, is, to the eye of nature, and in the judgment of the godless, the very opposite of wisdom, and the counterpart of mercy. A correct

estimate of both, however, is quite attainable, and has been attained. Nor can human reason take any credit to itself in the attainment. No mere man can comfortably to himself, or profitably to others, explain the solemnizing attribute of the Deity on the one hand, nor the sufferings of saints on the other. There is but one principle upon which these hidden things can be, to some extent, disclosed; that is, the principle of faith. Now this faith is begotten by no uninspired arguments, and lives not on the unaided exertions of mere intellect. It is a divine principle; that is, it came from God, and it lives in God, even though it has its being and its motions on the earth. Consequently, operating in any human mind, it necessarily deposits there the seeds of immortal truth, so that it is not so much reason, as it is revelation, that it has to do with. Dwelling in the human heart, it diffuses such warmth of love and trust, as that every sentiment and desire become imbued with its spirit, fascinated by its promises, and completely subject to its influence. The result of all this is, that faith, occupying a kind of middle position between heaven and earth, readily justifies all the ways of God to man, and reconciles man to the providence and to the grace of God. Mysteries, coming to the saint, first through his faith in the divine goodness and wisdom, are received with humility, and neither startle nor disaffect his mind; while trials, commissioned from above, and first of all received by faith, are endured with a calmness and fortitude, which it were impossible to account for upon natural causes. This was the great mediating principle by which Abraham was so intimately connected with Jehovah, that, instantly on the divine will being expressed, he hoped against hope, believed against belief, combated natural affection, and reached the bright eminence of

trust in the faithfulness of God, even when that faithfulness was imperilled by the descending knife. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country. By faith, when he was tried, he offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

How few there be amongst us that have the faith of Abraham! It cannot be otherwise till more holy and earnest effort is made to increase our faith; till indeed we are persuaded that it is our duty to aim at "full assurance." We are verily to blame in this matter; inasmuch as, if we were so disposed, the means are within our reach for greatly enlarging this Christian grace. "Faith is the gift of God." He is the "Father of lights," and consequently of faith, as one of the most brilliant of them all. To him, therefore, in earnest prayer we must apply, not only for the original gift, but for its steady and cumulative influences. The prayerless are they that are faithless: and the prayerful only are the believing, who become "the lights of the world." This honor have all the saints, and they are solely indebted for it to the grace of God. If, then, we sincerely desire to be strong in faith, we must make very diligent use of all the means of grace. Specially must the word of God be studied; not formally read merely, but most seriously and perseveringly studied. The character of God, and the worth and work of the Saviour, as therein described, must become regular subjects of meditation, together with the divine modes of dealing with the saints in past

generations. In addition to this, we must be prepared to offer uncompromising resistance to the temptations of the world, the devil, and the flesh. No longer "lovers of pleasure," the aspirants after *great faith* must become "lovers of God," in an eminent degree. The whole life, in short, must be surrendered to the activities of Christianity. We must not consider ourselves as our own, but as "bought with a price;" even with the precious blood of Christ; and bought for the glory of his name, and the advancement of his cause on earth. Less than this may be, and alas! too generally is given; but less than this cannot achieve the mighty works of patriarchal faith.

If, then, Christians would have comfort in God; if they would see through the clouds and darkness that go before him, into the very smiles of his face; if they would unravel all mysteries to act thereon as if they comprehended them; if they would have the flesh, with its affections and lusts, crucified; if they would get complete control of those deeply-seated principles, and those bounding affections of their nature which are so apt to rebel against the stern requirements of sovereign law, and the opening of the vials of Jehovah's anger; if they would be put in possession of the secret for finding God out in the word, in the cross, and in the providence, and for comfortably interpreting all his procedure with them from birth to death; and if they would learn the way to entomb self in oblivion, to cast the world behind their back, to carry their most cherished possessions, even to bind their very Isaacs to the altars of God, there to shed their blood if commanded; if they would do these mighty works, and works kindred to these, they must have faith towards God; they must "endure as seeing God, who is invisible;"

they must become the children of faithful Abraham; they must trust God as much in the dark as in the light, in the breach as in the fulfilment of promises, in the chambers of affliction as in the house of mirth, in poverty as in plenty, in death as in life.

# MOUNT HOREB,

AND

# THE CALL OF MOSES.

God promised to Abraham, that to him and to his seed would be given the land of Canaan. The time, however, was not specified; consequently the faith of the Hebrews was kept in constant exercise. They "waited upon the Lord," in anticipation of the day when he would ride forth in "truth and faithfulness." During their captivity in Egypt, it does not very clearly appear that they thought much about the Abrahamic covenant. Like all the victims of slavery, their spirits were crushed under oppression, while their despair of immediate emancipation gradually reconciled them to their captivity. We are not warranted to conclude, however, that there were none amongst them who confidently expected an exodus from it. From the day that the Chaldean pilgrim departed from Ur, to the reign of that monarch who "knew not Joseph," God never left himself without a witness among the descendants of the patriarch. The dying words of Joseph were never, even throughout that age of gloomy darkness which followed his decease, altogether forgotten: "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; and *God will surely visit you*,

and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." To this testimony some would cling with believing tenacity; and though generations passed away, and their external condition waxed more and more miserable, the hope would not be destroyed that in God's time it would be verified. And so it was. As four hundred years elapsed from the time of Noah to the call of Abraham, so an equal number passed away from the days of Abraham to the call of Moses. "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." When these years had fled, He who had spoken face to face with the father of the faithful, but who, during this long interval, had neither broken silence nor come out of his secret place of thunder, again appeared. His presence was vouchsafed to one of "the Hebrew children," in a region of the world far from their house of bondage, denoted by the inspired historian as "the mountain of God, even Horeb."* Before describing the scene, let us ascertain the topography of the mountain.

# PART I.

## THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD.

HOREB—ARABIA PETREA—SINAIC GROUP—JEBAL KATRINE, AND JEBAL MUSA, THE TWO PEAKS OF ONE MOUNTAIN.

Immediately after crossing the Red Sea, at the place where it is almost certain the Israelites made

* Exodus iii. 1.

the miraculous passage, the traveller enters the country called Arabia. Arabia presents the form of a vast peninsula, connected with the south-western extremity of Asia by an isthmus of sandy deserts, the breadth of which has been estimated at eight hundred English miles. It has long been "famous for its poisonous blasts, odoriferous plants of frankincense, myrrh, cassia, and cinnamon, its coffee shrubs, its manna, and its camels and horses." But our visit to it at present is occasioned by some more powerful attraction than its interesting natural history. By Ptolemy, one of the kings of Egypt, who flourished a few centuries before the coming of our Saviour, Arabia was divided into three parts: Arabia Felix, Arabia Deserta, and Arabia Petrea. It was into this third division of the country, Arabia Petrea, so called from Petra, the ancient capital of the Nabotheans, that the Israelites entered, when they crossed the Red Sea and traversed the wilderness, which is bounded on the west by its waters. Within three days they reached the fountain called Marah, where the waters were bitter; and from Marah they journeyed till they came to "Horeb." The country in that region seems to be as unproductive and wild now as it was then. A recent traveller tells us "that there is no part of the world where the face of nature, and the natural landmarks, have remained so totally unchanged. In the days of Moses, as now, it was a barren, mountainous region; bare of verdure, and destitute of streams of living water. So that the Almighty was obliged to sustain his people with manna from heaven, and water from the rocks."

Leaving Marah, and still keeping to the south-east, the traveller in a few days gets into a still more mountainous and dreary region, where there are very few inhabitants, and these almost entirely composed of in-

dependent Bedouins, or wandering Arabs. The mountains here form the high lands in the interior of Arabia Petrea; and the north-western portion has been designated by some, the region of Horeb; by others, the Sinaic group, because Mount Sinai stands in the centre. This range of mountains is of considerable extent, and fills up a large space in that peninsula which projects into the Red Sea, having the gulf of Suez on its west, and the gulf of Akaba on its east. The district by which Sinai is approached from the north, is called in scripture "the wilderness of sin;" and the valley immediately at the base of Sinai, where the children of Israel were assembled at the promulgation of the law, is called the Desert of Sinai. When nearing this central elevation in the high land of the peninsula, the traveller sees before him this valley, bounded by high rocky cliffs; and immediately in front, though still more than a day's journey distant, stands the sacred mountain itself, directly across the road, and, as has been said, "looking like the end of the world." After passing through this valley, shut in on either hand by lofty and crumbling mountains, on whose sides, notwithstanding, are produced oranges, dates, and figs, in great abundance, the traveller suddenly reaches a plain table of ground, from which the ascent to the most remarkable mountain among the Sinaic range, (three miles in length,) may be said to commence.

It is proper, however, to notice, that the "Horeb" of scripture, and the "Sinai," to be afterwards commented on, do not form two distinct mountains, though different names are used when referring to them. There appears to be a sense in which Horeb is Sinai, and Sinai is Horeb. Much difference of opinion exists among intelligent travellers upon this subject. With-

out occupying time by more particular references to their various conjectures, we shall simply state, what, upon the whole, appears to be the most correct view of the subject. In the very centre, then, of the cluster, called indiscriminately Horeb or Sinai, there is one stupendous mountain, which, like Ararat, is divided into two parts, or two immense cones, "towering, like giant twin-brothers," above the rest. The one is called Jebal Katrine, and the other Jebal Musa. The highest one is called "Jebal Katrine," or the "Mountain of Catherine," because of the convent of St. Catherine's which was built upon it, in the fourth century, by Helena, the mother of Constantine, to commemorate the conversion to Christianity of a daughter of one of the kings of Alexandria, whose name was Catherine. The legend says that her father, in consequence of her conversion, put her to death; and that the angels brought her body and interred it on the summit. This appears to be the division of the mountain called in scripture Horeb; and the district surrounding it is designated "the back side of the desert," where Moses was feeding the flock of Jethro. A chapel is now erected over the spot where that marvellous spectacle was seen; and as travellers enter the precincts, they are addressed by the attending monk in these words: "Put thy shoes from off thy feet, for the ground whereon thou treadest is holy ground." "The place," says one, "is now bedizened with Grecian ornaments. The rude simplicity of nature which beheld the interview between God and his servant is utterly gone; and the burning bush is the last thing one would think of on the spot where it grew."

The other division, or second peak, is at present named "Jebal Musa" by the Arabs, that is, the "Mountain of Moses;" so called because from its

summit the law was promulgated, and there he received from God the two tables of stone on which that law was inscribed. To this peak, consequently, the name of Sinai has been given. I have already noticed that the whole group of mountains in that peninsula are by some comprehended under the general designation of the "Mountains of Sinai;" also, that in scripture, Horeb is used as a general and descriptive title of this interesting region of hill and valley. Be this as it may, it is likely that the general name either of Sinai or Horeb took a particular application when any one of the group was distinguished, as these peaks or cones were, by the manifestations of Deity. It appears, then, that in considering the scripture references to this locality, we must look for this place where God first met with Moses in the larger division of the centre mountain of the Sinaic group, called Jebal Katrine; and we must look for the mountain whereon the law was given in the lesser eminence beside it, called Jebal Musa, or the Mountain of Moses. Horeb, then, is Jebal Katrine, and Sinai is Jebal Musa.

Travellers describe this double-peaked mountain as presenting a grand and imposing spectacle. Horeb rises almost perpendicularly from the plain. It is of deep red granite, and is about four thousand feet above the level of the sea. Sinai is more easy of access, and is about three thousand feet above the level of the sea. It terminates at the top in white granite, to which Milton is thought to allude when he sings of the "gray topped Sinai." Its summit is only about sixty feet square in extent, which is partly occupied by a chapel belonging to the convent at the foot of the mount. Dr. Wilson was shown, a little below this chapel, a mark in the granite, said to be an impression of the foot of the camel of Mahomet when he ascended this

height; and also a small hollow of the rock into which the monks imagine that Moses retired, when the glory of God was revealed before him.

To "the terrific solitude and bleak majesty" of this dreary region, it pleased God to come down that he might again converse with man. The place selected for the interview might have been somewhere about the base, or on the side of that division of Sinai called Horeb, which derives additional force from the fact that there is pasturage for flocks there, whereas there is little or no verdure on the sides of the neighboring peak, the Mount of Moses. Our attention is now to be turned to the distinguished individual who was, at this time and in this place, solemnly set apart by Jehovah to be the liberator of his people Israel.

# PART II.

## PORTRAIT OF MOSES.

HIS EARLY HISTORY—FAMILY SCENES—PROVIDENCE—TRUST IN GOD—FLIGHT FROM EGYPT—ARRIVAL IN HOREB.

Moses was born in Egypt. His parents were Hebrews. Before his birth the king of Egypt had become jealous of the descendants of Jacob. They were rapidly increasing, and he determined to diminish both their numbers and influence. Hence, after the failure of other expedients, he commanded that every Hebrew male infant should be cast into the river. This last decree was in operation at the birth of Moses. His parents were in perplexity as to what they should do

with the child. He was an unusually beautiful one. The martyr Stephen tells us he was "divinely fair." At the end of three months, during which she had hid her child, his mother was necessitated to consign him to the waters of the Nile, and the jaws of the crocodiles, with which that river abounds. Guided, however, by Providence, and, we doubt not, in the hope that something might occur to preserve her child, Jochebed "took one of the common baskets made from the papyrus, and strengthened it and made it impervious to the water, by daubing it on the outside with bitumen, and in the inside with the slime of the river." In this strange bed she then cradled her infant. But, surely, ere this ark and its precious treasure are carried away, never to return, the family would be assembled, and a last look would be taken. The scene must have been truly melting. Behold that manly figure bending over the little ark! He embraces the boy, and then raising his heart to heaven, commits him to the God of Israel. That is Amram, the father; he dashes the tear from his cheek, and retires under a severe conflict of nature. And what children are these who watch the whole proceedings with intense but silent wonder? They, too, gaze as for the last time on the child, who, it may be, smiles on recognizing their well-known looks; for these are Aaron and Miriam, the brother and sister of Moses, who were afterwards associated with him in the wondrous works that were done in this same land of Ham, and in the terrible things that were done in the Red Sea.

And now this scene of agony is over. The lid is shut, and Jochebed takes up the ark. O, never, never, from beneath the homely roof tree, did mother carry such a burden as this, and with such a bursting heart as hers! But she must needs go forth to the Nile;

and to the Nile she came, and there, among the flags that grew upon the river's brink, she laid her burden down. Having done so, she returned to her home. But mark, there must have been faith in God at work the meanwhile in her family, for Miriam, her daughter, now about nine or ten years of age, remains at some distance from the spot "to wit what would be done to him." How astonishing the Providence of God! Behold, in a short time—had it been protracted the child might have been carried down the stream, or devoured by the crocodiles—some females approach the very spot. One of them is a princess, the daughter of Pharaoh. Had it been a woman of common rank she would not have dared to do what the royal Thermutis did. She espies the ark; commands it to be brought, and opened before her. She sees a beautiful infant, and that infant weeping. How providential these tears! they melt her heart. She immediately resolves to adopt the child. But who shall be his nurse? How exceedingly touching the scriptural narrative here! Miriam, narrowly watching the whole procedure, and though little more than a child herself, makes bold to approach. How natural! it was her own sweet infant brother; she knew how sad her mother was at parting with him, and she must needs hear and see what passes. She instantly detects pity at work in the royal bosom, quickly anticipates her benevolent intention, and perhaps, by her seasonable question, gives decision to the already nearly formed purpose of that lady's heart, "Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?" With what alacrity would Miriam execute her commission! She knew where to find a nurse; and, keeping her secret to herself, "she went and called the child's mother."

Jochebed came quickly; was hired to nurse her own infant, and watched over him for three years, after which she carried him to the palace, and resigned him into the hands of the princess, and Moses became her son.

Who can meditate on this scene without being convinced that there is a Providence that over-rules and controls all that comes to pass; and not only a general, but a special Providence, condescending to the most minute, and, as we may think, trifling matters, as well as comprehensive of the mightiest and most august events that shake the nations to their centre; a Providence that watches over the revolutions of worlds, and notices the fall of a sparrow! To believe that all this has happened to the child of Amram and Jochebed, especially when his future history is considered, was merely chance work, is a much more violent shock to reason, than to trace it to such a source. It must indeed be so, not only in this, but in every case. God is everywhere, and sees all that goes on. He is infinitely wise, and knows all that is to occur. He is infinitely good, and orders all for the general good of his creatures; and he is infinitely powerful, and uses his power to promote their happiness. Their disordering his wise arrangements by sin, is the sole cause of their miseries; but the events that counteract evils in their lot are entirely under his own management. All this must be especially true of his "peculiar people." Their entire history is one of special, or, as it may be termed, of gracious Providence. To this they are indebted for their birth in a land of gospel light, their Christian parentage, their religious nurture; and all the events in their lot, whether joyous or grievous, that work together for their good, flow from this. It is God who preserves them

alive when disease threatens to destroy them; who appoints them wealth, or confines them to poverty, as either the one or the other estate is to bear most usefully on their wellbeing; and it is God who assigns to them a larger or smaller cup of affliction, according to what he knows is to be their peculiar spiritual needs. Consequently, we never murmur over the trials and vicissitudes of life without impugning his goodness, and thereby incurring his displeasure. Consider Jochebed, the wife of Amram and the mother of Moses! She believed in this consolatory doctrine, and trusted that her child, when laid in the waters of the Nile, was as certainly under His care as when sleeping in her own bosom. How many parental pangs might be spared us, if, when thus tried in the early decease of our own children, we would imitate this pious woman of the house of Levi! She did not know, when she committed her child to the river, that he was so soon to be restored to her, and yet she went through the trial, bowing her head to the mysterious will of her God! Such resignation is also incumbent on us when death blanches the fair cheeks of our infants, or prostrates now a hopeful son, and now a lovely daughter. When we lay their dead bodies in the coffin, and when the grave at last hides them from our view, let us remember that there is a Providence in it all, and that a Providence watches over it all. Our Isaac will be given back from the altar, our Moses will be raised from the grave; for neither our young men nor our maidens are dead—they only sleep; and He who sets a watch over their precious dust will awaken them in the morning, and restore them to us, radiant in the beauties of holiness, and buoyant with immortal youth!

Within the palace of the Pharaohs, Moses lived till

he was forty years of age. He was, though an Hebrew, treated as one of the royal family. An eastern princess, in these times, such as Thermutis who drew him from the water, had extraordinary influence; her will was law in the house of her father. We can easily understand, then, how the adopted son of Pharaoh should receive the full advantages of his high rank. The scriptures tell us expressly regarding his splendid education and wonderful intellectual attainments; "he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." Jewish literature, too, is full of glowing descriptions of his life at the court of Pharaoh. He is represented as having been a beautiful poet, an accomplished historian, musician, and astronomer. The Pentateuch, the book of Job, and the ninetieth psalm, all of which are understood to be his compositions, corroborate these views.

How true is it, when we think of this initiatory process, that God "makes the wrath of men to praise him," and that "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord!" Pharaoh would nip in the bud this rising hope of the house of Israel; when, lo! his own daughter is employed to save the future prophet and give him nourishment within the walls of his palace! Pharaoh would keep Israel in bondage; when, lo! to his own wise men, the heads of Egyptian literature, and to his most experienced warriors and statesmen, is this boy assigned, that he might be fully accomplished in the learning and philosophy of that day, as also in the arts of war, and the science of government.

But God will take no more from the wicked than what serves his purpose. When Moses had lived long enough in Egypt to acquire all this knowledge, and to become acquainted with the history and pros-

pects of his own people, he was sent to a school of a very different character, and to get wisdom and experience which neither the court nor the astrologers of Pharaoh could impart. It is evident from the inspired narrative that, though living amid the splendors and pleasures of a palace, he could not forget the afflictions of the people of God. He knew himself to be a Hebrew, and that they were his brethren. This is a noble feature in the character of this illustrious man. Greatly tempted to regard them as a nation of slaves, and having at his command the sources of earthly gratification, yet he could not brook the idea of his brethren's oppression, while he revelled in plenty within the citadel of their oppressors. It has been thought that the death of Pharaoh about this period determined him in his course. His benefactress, it is understood, ascended the throne; in which position she could no longer continue to recognize him as a Hebrew, but desired that he should submit to a formal act of naturalization and adoption, so as to constitute him legally an Egyptian. This was the critical moment; and on his decision depended the highest destinies. Love to the queen, who had been as a mother to him, and to whose patronage he was so much indebted, would powerfully advocate her claims, and as painfully agitate his mind in resisting them. Let us imagine him retiring from the royal presence to meditate and pray. It might be that, amid troubled thoughts, and the balancing of conflicting interests, he found himself on one of the stately turrets of the palace. Perhaps it was evening, and the silver light of the moon beautified the scene. Lo, how quickly his eye selects and is fixed on one spot in that landscape! It rests not upon the city, whose busy hum dies away as man reposes after toil; nor upon the fertile fields that stretch out

far and wide on every hand, waving with corn; nor even upon Goshen, from whence his countrymen had been dragged to the brick kilns of Pharaoh. That eye rests upon the waters of the Nile, and upon the very spot from which he had been rescued in his infancy, and which had been ever associated in his mind with the mysterious purposes of God with regard to himself. Thus musing, he revolves the stories of his ancestors, as he had heard them from the lips of Jochebed during these three precious years of childhood which he had passed under her care. Then came thoughts about the present sufferings of these descendants of the patriarchs, and also of the covenants and promises of God with regard to their future greatness. His purpose is at once formed. He returns to Thermutis, and, with singular self-denial, gracefully but firmly declines the honors she intended for him. How beautifully is this expressed by an apostle! "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, *refused* to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."

The spirit of the future deliverer of Israel now worked strongly within the bosom of Moses. He soon had an opportunity of manifesting his patriotic preferences. In one of these days, when mingling with his brethren, and looking upon their burdens, he saw an Egyptian smite an Hebrew. He instantly slew the Egyptian, and buried him in the sand. Next day he saw two Hebrews quarrelling. He interfered to make peace between them, not doubting but that, by this time, even they would be convinced that in him was the hope of their people. "He supposed," says Stephen,

"that his brethren would have understood how that God would by his hand deliver them; but they understood not." One of them said, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" Moses no doubt knew that he had been seen by some of his own brethren, but he had hoped that from them no imprudent allusions to the deed would ever come. On observing this indication of an ungenerous spirit, he judged that it would not be safe for him to remain longer in Egypt. Orders were given for his apprehension; but he was not to be found. He was soon beyond the reach of pursuit. He fled upwards of two hundred and fifty miles to the east, crossed the Red Sea, entered Arabia Petrea, and, descending to the land of Midian, in the region of the Sinaic mountains already referred to, he was married to one of the seven daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian, and for forty years followed the humble occupation of a shepherd, keeping the flocks of his father-in-law; "meanwhile forgotten both by Hebrews and Egyptians, or remembered only as a tradition." To the eye of reason, such a conclusion to such a life appears most inappropriate and unseemly. The poet would have crowned him with laurels, gathered from all fields; the novelist would have carried him onwards in a career of earthly gayety and grandeur in the court and kingdom of the Pharaohs. But the history of Moses is not yet completed; and, in the end, it will be seen that in his case, "before honor is humility," and that "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

# PART III.

## THE BURNING BUSH.

SCENE ON HOREB—BURNING BUSH—CALL AND COMMISSION OF MOSES—BUSH NOT CONSUMED, TYPICAL—DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE SYMBOL—CLOSING REFLECTIONS.

Moses passed the first forty years of his life in the palace of a king. The next forty slid away in the wilds and solitude of an Arabian desert. In the palace his manners had been polished, and his mind educated. In the desert both had been subjected to a discipline which was necessary to qualify him for being a "king in Jeshurun." In Egypt he must have acquired some habits, both of temper and action, unsuitable to that position, and these must be subdued. He was evidently not a meek man. He was quick and ardent, and so far disqualified from being the leader of an obstinate and ungrateful people. His religious principles must have been kept essentially orthodox. Still, it must be owned that a life at court, and such a court as Pharaoh's, could not afford the requisite preparation for the endurance of trials and difficulties, such as afterwards befell him. While, then, his life in the desert would so far undo what of the Egyptian remained in him, it would likewise give decided encouragement to his feelings and purposes as a man of God. On the mountains of Horeb he must have often held very close and improving fellowship with Jehovah. "The very grandeur of the scenery around him would assist his conceptions of the glory of the Creator. The throng of cities and the pomp of courts no longer disturbed his imaginations. The

solitary deserts and unfrequented dales would present other charms to his mind, which, if not so fascinating to mere sense, were far more beneficial to his religious improvement. Though a recluse from the busy world, he would not be idle. He was too much a man of intellect for that. His time would pass pleasantly and profitably away, in reflecting on the history of his fathers, and in turning to good account the ample materials of thought with which his extensive and various acquirements supplied him."

Thus exercised, and for so long a period, he became what he had not been, not only a meek man, but, in the language of scripture, "very meek, above all the men on the face of the earth." He had great difficulties to contend with, but he became equal to them all. Adversity seems to be necessary to the man who is destined to act a conspicuous part in any portion of God's gracious work. Thus was David, in an after age, prepared for the throne of Israel. Thus was Paul trained to be an apostle; and I need not say that thus also "it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering."

On a certain day, Moses led his flock "to the back side of the desert," and came to "the mountain of God, even to Horeb." He did so, because that locality is much more verdant than the adjacent parts; pasture is more abundant, and it is well watered. But God, the Shepherd of Israel, led him to Horeb for another purpose. As he watched these flocks on this occasion,—he might, as usual, be employed in the silent worship of Him whose awful form he had so oft seen shadowed forth, and whose voice he had so often heard in the storms of Sinai—his attention was sud-

denly arrested by a remarkable phenomenon in his immediate neighborhood. This was a flame of fire in the midst of a bush, and the bush burning, but not consumed. His curiosity was excited, and he said to himself, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." But no sooner did he draw near than he was addressed by a voice from the bush itself, and the voice said, "Moses! Moses! And he said, Here am I." And the voice said, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." What astonishment would seize the mind of the shepherd! He saw no form of angel or of man, and yet he heard the voice thus distinctly name and address him. He listened again, and the voice spake—"I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses became still more overawed, and, it is written, he "hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land into a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." God's "set times" always come round for favoring Zion. The present was one of the most remarkable that we have on record. Now we see the mysterious cloud rising from off the covenant which he had made with the patriarchs, and which it seemed as if he had clean forgotten. Now is about to commence that long and intensely interesting chain of events which must include at once the gathering together into one of the outcasts of Israel,

their exodus from Egypt, their sojourn in the wilderness, and their organization into a kingdom, and into a church.

The scene on Horeb was eminently symbolical. "The angel of the Lord," it is said, "appeared in a flame of fire." There can be no doubt that this was the glorious and eternal Son, who was in after ages to come into our world, wearing our nature. Fire or light was, in the former dispensations, frequently employed by God as a symbol of his presence. Thus, when Moses returned with the Hebrews to this same valley, Jehovah descended on Mount Sinai in the midst of fire. A pillar of fire preceded the Israelites in their nocturnal marches. The bright shechina, or visible glory, was the symbol of the divine presence within the holy of holies; and in the beginning of the gospel dispensation, when the Holy Ghost came down on the apostles, "there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." It has been noted as somewhat singular, that among the ancient Greeks supernatural light was considered a token of the presence of Deity. Homer relates that Minerva waited on Ulysses with her golden lamp or torch; and that Telemachus thus in rapture addressed his father—

> "What miracle thus dazzles with surprise?
> Distinct in rows the radiant columns rise;
> The walls, where'er my wondering sight I turn,
> And roofs amid a blaze of glory burn!
> Some visitant of pure ethereal race
> With his bright presence deigns the dome to grace!"

This symbolical spectacle, then, may represent one or other of these things:—

1. The bush burning denotes the afflicted condition of God's people at that time—the church suffering in

Egypt. Its not being consumed intimates the indestructibility of that church, notwithstanding all that was done against her by her oppressors; and the angel of God appearing in it in a flame of fire, is expressive of the divine presence with her in the midst of tribulations. There is a beautiful passage in one of the Rabbinical writings that expresses this thought most affectingly: "God walked in the bush, and the bush represented the trouble and sorrow wherewith we are encompassed. But when God saw his Israel walk in the midst of them, he resolved to walk likewise with his people; confirming thus what he said by his prophet, 'in all their afflictions he was afflicted.'"

2. Enlarging upon this interpretation of the symbol, it has been applied to God's presence in all the trials of his church in every age. Hence by the mouth of one of his prophets he says, "I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." Again—"And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence." When these promises are fulfilled, then the church shall "look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

3. A third interpretation refers this symbol to the future passion of our Saviour, when he endured the dreadful fire of Jehovah's anger, as our substitute, on the accursed tree, and yet was not destroyed. He arose from the fiery ordeal, a Saviour "made perfect" in consequence.

It is not difficult to see the design of Jehovah-Jesus in this manifestation. He knew that the man whom he had chosen was not so "forward" now as he had

been in the days when he slew the Egyptian. Forty years' seclusion in the desert had, in a great measure, moderated his views. The impetuosity of youth had been subdued, and the desire for an active life had been moderated, if not extinguished, within him. Hence, at the time, he shows great backwardness to comply with the invitation of the angel. The manner, however, of his call, the sight he saw, the words he heard, all tended to revive his ancient longings after deeds of enterprise and glory. To the encouragements of Jehovah he finally yielded. "His hesitation and resistance had been that of a man but too well aware of the duties of the office to which he was called, and who knew that they must be discharged, and was determined to discharge them. So, henceforth we hear no more of doubt and difficulty. The youth of his mind was revived, and from that day to the last of his protracted life, all its powerful energies were devoted to the deliverance and welfare of Israel."

That heart is to be pitied which remains unimpressed by such a scene as this. With intense interest the church had waited for centuries on the development of the divine plans; but generations passed away and no sound was heard but her own sighing in exile, and no sight was seen, either in heaven or earth, to indicate that Jehovah still remembered the seed of Abraham. At last when matters had come to the worst, Jehovah re-appears, in an unfrequented and remote region, and to a man whom his brethren had rejected. So true is it that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation." He brings up his Moses from a desert to drive Pharaoh from a throne. It was to be expected that, when Jehovah did again manifest himself, it would be to accomplish some very grand object, and that in some very striking and imposing

form. Apparently there was little external grandeur in a burning bush; but, when examined, it turned out to be a most marvellous thing; for though burning it was not consumed. And thus it is with some of the grandest moral manifestations of Deity. Calvary and its cross were "unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;" but, when looked into with a clear eye, there were beheld the wisdom and the power of God. There, men and devils considered that they had destroyed the man whom they hated; but, when Faith reconnoitred the scene, it saw victory crowning the Saviour—it saw the blood and terror of death produce the life and glory of millions born, and as yet unborn. Apparently, too, this resumption of the divine intercourse with men promised but little, save a mere temporal deliverance from slavery; but, read as it is now, in the light of its progressive and ultimate history, how big with marvellous consequences was the scene at Horeb! True, much was still hid of what were to be the peculiarities of the economy to be constructed; but, though only gently and slowly, at Horeb, the veil is partially rent, so that we can discern, far down into the vista of the future, the faint outlines of the "fat things" in reserve for the house of Israel. Jehovah now appears intent on great exploits. As if he can wait no longer, even on himself, he here strikingly typifies much of what afterwards passed into the substance of the gospel plan. Here were prophet, priest, and king, in Moses. Here was the eternal Word to be made flesh, and to suffer and die in the fulness of the times, symbolized in the flame in the bush, and in the miraculous preservation of the bush in the flame. Soon, now, the necessary exodus from Egypt is to be made. Soon, now, that awful voice, which had never been heard

from the foundation of the world, except by one or two favored sons of men, was to be heard by millions at a time; and soon the whole elements of the preparatory economy, which was to embody the types and figures of the person, offices, and atonement of Christ, were to be made known and put into operation.

Let us not despise the day of small things. It seems a simple matter to open or to shut a door; but the opening of a door for entrance may be followed by the sight and possession of all the treasures that are within; while the shutting of that door, and the keeping of it shut, may leave thousands in destitution and despair. At Horeb such a door was opened, and it was never shut till the dispensation to which it belonged was dissolved. God here threw back from his secret place much of that awful mystery that had hitherto shrouded it, and his church now approached nearer to him than it had ever done. It got within the mystic circle that, for ages to come, was to comprehend and witness his preparatory movements, up to the actual sacrifice of himself in human form on the cross. Once, therefore, fairly enclosed with him in covenant engagements now to be executed, that church, from this time, looked every day and year for some more pertinent and consolatory revelations of ultimate design, till the whole scheme should be finished, and the preliminary arrangements disappear.

Nor did she look in vain. To this very spot, in a short time, did Moses return with the church; and, from that day, forward to the hour of Christ's death, came forth the great and glorious decrees of divine love, becoming more and more clear, and more and more ample, as the period approached for the magnificent consummation on the cross. Whatever God begins he will complete. He may promise to our

first parents, and leave off for hundreds of years, as if he had not; he may promise again to Noah, and retire for other centuries, as if he were slack concerning his word; he may promise again to Abraham, and hide himself for other hundreds of years; but he will return to Horeb, and lay deep the foundations of that gorgeous structure, before whose altars, and within whose temples, he indicates for as many centuries his future plans of vindicating his own covenant honor. And, when at last the sacred cycle is complete, when the full round of typical revolutions has been made, *there*, in the very Son of his love, and in the Saviour of his people, he comes forth resplendent in the redemption of promises, to be glorified in all his saints.

Let the people of God see in all this the pledge of that safety, triumph, and perfection, which yet await the church. Truly her best and brightest days are yet to come. Though now under the superior and clearer light of the gospel, and even "willing for a season to rejoice" in that light, yet does she, after all, only "see through a glass darkly." Though possessed of the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free, yet there are not a few fetters which impede her progress, which remind her of her wilderness condition, and tell her that "this is not her rest:" and though secure of the favor and gracious presence of her King, who has promised to destroy every one of her enemies, yet is she frequently brought upon days of darkness, in which she goes about "mourning without the sun," these enemies apparently prevailing over her, and her cause brought well nigh to the dust. But there is no reason why she should either murmur or despond. Her progress towards a more glorious condition, even in this world, than any she has as yet reached, is certified to her, not only in the modes of God's dealing

with Zion in ancient times, but in many precious assurances to that effect. Her millennial glory yet awaits her; and it shall as surely come, as came "the fulness of the time," and the birth of the promised Shiloh. Her celestial glory, too, is yet to be attained, and attained it shall be, under the divine sway of Him who, on Horeb, was shadowed forth in the symbolic bush, but who, in heaven, shall be seen face to face by "the general assembly and church of the first-born." "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

# MOUNT SINAI,

AND

# THE PROMULGATION OF THE LAW.

When the angel of the Lord had left communing with Moses, we are told that "he took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand." On his arrival in Egypt he convened the elders of Israel, and acquainted them with what had been disclosed to him on Horeb. His brother Aaron was, from this period, associated with him in the sacred office to which God had consecrated them. It is written, "the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped." Upon the various plagues sent to Pharaoh and his people, to influence them to give the Hebrews an exodus from Egypt, we need not animadvert. That liberty was at length granted, and the Israelites marched out of the country of their long bondage, crossed the Red Sea miraculously, and continued their journey in Arabia Petrea for nearly three months, till they came into the wilderness of Sinai, and "there Israel camped before the mount;" that is, upon the low grounds before the

double-peaked mountain formerly described. Horeb was the scene of the burning bush; but the promulgation of the law was made from the mountain of Moses, which is Sinai. To the sublime and altogether appalling circumstances in which that law was delivered let us now direct our meditations.*

# PART I.

## THE GIVING OF THE LAW.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE DESCENT OF JEHOVAH—THE DIVINE APPROACH — ITS APPALLING CONCOMITANTS — MOSES' ASCENTS AND DESCENTS—THE GOLDEN CALF.

On the occasion of Jehovah's former visit to this wild region, only one of his people was present. At this time, six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, amounting to nearly three millions in all, were encamped before Sinai, and there witnessed the grandest spectacle ever presented to the eyes of mortals. It was now the purpose of God to come down from heaven and display his glory. But, previous to this, three days were to elapse, which were to be occupied in solemn preparations for meeting God, who, on the third day, was to come down in the sight of all the people. The Hebrews were to wash their clothes, to sanctify themselves, to set bounds around the mount, across which neither priests nor people were to step, on peril of perishing; yea, they were not to touch the mount, not even the border of it; "for

* Exodus xix.

whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death." We can easily conceive the intense interest with which that vast multitude would attend to these instructions, and their deep solicitude about the intentions of that awful Being who was to manifest his glory before them. Within every tent this would be the topic of conversation, and within every mind this would be the predominant subject of thought. Many eager looks, during these days of preliminary arrangement, would be directed to that bleak and frowning mountain, and many conjectures would be formed about the moment and the mode of the grand descent on its summit!

The morning of the third day dawned—all Israel was astir; there was a going to and fro among the people. We may believe no sluggard folded his arms to sleep then. At every tent-door throughout the wilderness, were groups of gazing spectators. Fathers were there whose hands had been hardened in the oppressions of Egypt; mothers were there whose hearts had sunk within them over the tears and cries of their enslaved children; and children were there who did not yet understand the ways of the Lord, but who were destined to become the future warriors that should take possession of the land of promise. As they thus stood, the order of Moses circulated throughout the camp that they should all come forth and meet with God. And they all came forth and "stood at the nether part of the mount." Now, every tongue is silent, every murmur hushed, and every eye is fixed on Sinai. The stillness that pervades the vast assembly is fearfully profound, when, lo! a distant rumbling noise disturbs that stillness. It is the noise of thunder. The people draw closer to one another, for thunder has a solemnizing effect; it is the voice of the Lord God

omnipotent. Then after the thunder, came vivid and terrific flashes of lightning. The people turn pale, and fix themselves more firmly on the ground. The mother hides her babe in her bosom, the children cling to their parents, and the parents fear for themselves and offspring. After the thunders and lightnings, came down a thick cloud upon the mount. By and by, Sinai is enveloped, from its summit to its base, in smoke; which smoke "ascended as the smoke of a furnace."

Sinai is now invisible, and the people, whom fear has wedged more closely together, gaze in astonishment, wondering what prodigies must next appear. As they looked upon that dense mass of cloud, within whose smoky folds the sacred hill lay concealed, they beheld strange fire descending from the higher regions of the air. That fire alighted on the summit of the cloud-clothed Sinai; and in that fire was the Almighty himself. Then, piercing through cloud and camp, was heard "the voice of a trumpet, exceeding loud;" and that voice sounded long, and waxed louder and louder. It was not the varying notes of the loud clarion playing with the gentle and musical echoes of the hills, but one long, long, monotonous, loud, and ever waxing louder stream of awful sound, which drowned the very noise of the thunder itself. Then, not only the millions of Israel, but the ground on which they stood, trembled, and Sinai rocked to and fro as in a cradle! Angels were employed in this astonishing display; for "the Lord shined forth from Paran with the thousands of his saints," (that is of his angels,) and then "the earth trembled at the presence of the Lord," and "the mountains skipped like rams; yea, even Sinai melted from before the Lord God of Israel!" It is impossible to do justice, by description, to such a

terrific and sublime scene as this. To describe it is to profane it. Let us, therefore, put off the shoes from our feet. But, in the midst of all the thundering, and flashing, and quaking, another sound, different from the rest, reaches the ear. It is the voice of one that speaks. They listen, and they hear some one commanding their leader to ascend to the very top of that mount. IT IS THE VOICE OF GOD! And will Moses have courage to go up, in the very midst of that fire, exposed to the terrors and perils of that dread artillery? For a moment every eye in the camp is fixed on him. Some fear that he may be destroyed, and others, perhaps, implore him to remain. But, behold! the man of God arises! How erect his person, and how tranquil his appearance! He proceeds to the sacred limit, steps over it, ascends, enters the cloud, and disappears! Moses rested not till he gained the very summit. And not a few men of God since then, have had to climb even the ascent of Zion encompassed with many legal terrors. Determined, however, to gain its merciful and blissful heights, whatever were the difficulties and the discouragements of the passage, by the grace of God, they succeeded.

The scripture is not altogether silent as to what took place on the top of the mount, between Jehovah and his servant. Moses received a commandment to go down again, without delay, and prevent the people from looking through the prescribed bounds to gaze. Permission was, at the same time, given to bring up Aaron, when he should return. Moses descended; and immediately after he had resumed his proper position a the head of the congregation, the voice of God was again heard from within the cloud on the top of the mount; and it was at this time, and in those circumstances, that the moral law, which comprehends

the ten commandments, was promulgated. Surely, never was there before, and never has there been since, such a sermon, and such a preacher, and such an audience. With the mountain top for his pulpit, and the firmament for its canopy, Jehovah here lifted up his voice, and became himself the preacher to millions of his people. Surely, too, every eye was fixed on that mysterious fire upon the summit of the mount, and every ear listened to these solemn commandments, and every heart beat in holy unison with the will of the preacher. We are apt to think so; but it is possible that there were inattentive hearers, even on that day, in that vast congregation; just as now, men and women sit indifferent under the preaching of the gospel of God, which uses no threats, but offers salvation and eternal life. Let us not boast ourselves as if we were something; but, for the encouragement of humility and self-distrust, let us ever remember our Lord's striking words, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." The human heart is to be changed neither by the terrors of Sinai nor by the persuasions of the gospel. It is not by the might of the one, nor by the power of the other, but by the convincing and enlightening influences of the Holy Ghost. As Jehovah was repeating these holy, just, and good commandments, the solemnizing phenomena of thunder, fire, cloud, earthquake, and the sound of a trumpet, accompanied his dreadful voice. The effect of this upon the people seems to have been overwhelming, So long as God kept silence, they had been able to listen and look without absolute consternation; but when this voice was heard, they seem to have become incapable of farther endurance: "And they said unto Moses,

Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." The people then retired farther and farther from the mount. But Moses "drew nearer and nearer unto the thick darkness where God was." It appears, then, that the only portion of what was revealed on Sinai, which was heard by all the people, was the moral law, or the ten commandments. To Moses, alone, the minutæ of the judicial or civil law, and the regulations of a ceremonial or ritual character were communicated.

Immediately after he had received the judicial law, Moses returned to the camp, repeated to the people all that God had spoken; and obtained from them a solemn promise that "all the words which the Lord had said they would do." He then rose up early next morning, and wrote down the judicial enactments for future use. He next built an altar, on which were offered sacrifices of oxen to the Lord. After which, he took the book in which he had written the law, and read it in the audience of the people; and they said, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." This over, Moses, according to his instructions re-ascended the mount, taking with him Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. Having reached a particular elevation, a very splendid sight met their view: "And they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness; and upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand, and they saw God; and did eat and drink." This sublime scene seems to have lasted six days; after which, these representatives of the congregation returned to the camp. They all descended, excepting Moses and Joshua, who, for reasons not specified, remained for

several days by themselves. On the seventh day, Moses was again commanded to come up to the summit of the mountain; which he did, leaving Joshua his minister alone. At this time Moses continued forty days and forty nights, in the cloud on the top of Sinai, with the God of Israel; and all that time "the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire, on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel." During this long interview, Moses received from Jehovah the whole of what is called the ceremonial law; also, the two tables of stone, with the ten commandments inscribed on them by the finger of God himself.

This part of the sacred narrative is interrupted with an account of a most extraordinary instance of human depravity. The Israelites, notwithstanding all that they had so recently beheld and heard, when they saw that Moses was so long of returning, concluded that he might be dead, and that they might betake themselves to other gods. "Up, make us gods," they said to Aaron, "which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." How to account for it we know not, but Aaron appears to consent; a golden calf is made, and Israel falls down to worship the idol on the very spot where God had so recently commanded, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," and at the very time, too, that Sinai is crowned with his glory, and as yet is shaking under the tread of his foot. Moses is ordered quickly to descend. He finds Joshua on the way, and together they reach the idolatrous multitude. The man of God is wroth at the disgraceful and humiliating sight which met his eye, and casts down and breaks to pieces the two tables of stone. He challenges all that

are on the Lord's side to come unto him. The sons of Levi come. Every man girds his sword by his side; then they rush from gate to gate throughout the camp, and "slew every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor; and there fell of the people that day three thousand men."

Immediately after this, Moses is again, and for the last time, ordered to ascend to the top of Sinai; and after hewing two tables of stone like unto the first, he was found on its sacred summit. Again did Jehovah appear descending on the mount in the cloud, and again did other forty days and forty nights pass away before Moses was seen. It was at this time that he was favored with the sight of the glory of God, and with the proclamation of the incommunicable name as Jehovah passed by. Now, also, he got other two tables of testimony, in lieu of those he had broken, with additional instructions for the government of the church and commonwealth of the Hebrews. He then returned to the camp; but so brilliant had the complexion of his face now become, from this long communion with God, that he had to cast a veil over his head before the people could approach him. Many reflections crowd upon the devout and believing mind when contemplating such scenes. To some of these let us now attend.

# PART II.

## THE PROCLAMATIONS FROM SINAI.

GOD'S AWFUL MAJESTY—MAN'S DEPRAVITY—EXCELLENCE OF THE LAW—MAN BOUND TO OBEY—CONTRAST BETWEEN LAW AND GOSPEL—RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIANS.

I. SINAI PROCLAIMS—HOW GREAT IS GOD!—Surely this God is the Lord, and besides him there is none else. He is the supreme and only potentate. By him kings reign, and princes decree justice. "The Lord is a great God and a great King, above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is his also!" He, and he alone, giveth laws to his people! When he made man at the first he gave him these laws; they were written in his heart. No thunder, nor lightning, nor trumpet sound were needed to command for them the reverence of the creature. Made in the image of God, he naturally took to the law of God, and gave it perfect and cheerful obedience. This, however, continued only for a time. The creature transgressed these laws; and, though afterwards human nature became desperately wicked, the voice of conscience, vindicating these laws as wise, and just, and good, was not altogether silenced. Still, their fair and full lineaments were, to a great extent, obliterated; and as the sovereign Legislator had not, and could not have, relaxed his claims on obedience, so was it to be expected that there would at some time be, on his part, a re-publication of the law, in such a form and manner as would suit the depraved nature and rebellious position of the

creature. That time had now come, and the law was reproduced, as we have seen. How great is God! How glorious in his holiness! Nearly fifteen hundred years had passed since that law had been broken, but not until now was it re-issued. In this the sovereignty of God is most apparent. He must do everything, or nothing is done. If law is to be given, he must promulgate it. If gospel is to be preached, he must originate and proclaim it. He is indeed the Alpha and Omega at once of the law and of the gospel. "Counsel is his, and sound wisdom: He is understanding; he has strength!"

It is solemnizing to think that the God with whom we all have to do, is the very same Jehovah who, at this time, and in these dreadful circumstances, appeared on Sinai. He is as majestic as ever in his displays of glory; and though his thunders may not play around one particular mountain, nor his lightning illumine one particular valley, nor his footsteps shake one particular region of the solid globe, nor his voice resound throughout one particular encampment of his creatures, still are all these manifestations of his presence and power every now and then made throughout the extent of nature, to awaken his people to attention, and to subdue them to reverence. These phenomena are his instruments; they wait upon him to serve him, and at any time he may give them commandment to go forth and execute his purposes. That a time shall come when that commandment will be issued, we believe. Let us prepare to meet it. How dreadful the idea of meeting such a God, in such terrific disclosures of his majesty, with all our sins unforgiven! Awake, awake, ye sleepers! Escape for your lives! Flee unto Jesus! God is in him reconciling you to himself. You surely cannot fail to

see the necessity of being at peace with this God before a day of judgment dawns. The thought of his incomprehensible greatness ought of itself to induce you to repent and obey. You know it, and you cannot deny it; for it is written in your very hearts, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of such a God.

II. Sinai proclaims—How depraved is man!—Behold him at the foot of Sinai in all his meanness. That Hebrew, kneeling before yon golden calf, is but the type of every sinner. Such would we all become if left to ourselves. Alas! for poor human nature! Let it come in its dignity and see itself in the camp of Israel, and then go away and fling that dignity to the dust. Is it not humiliating to think of it? God had delivered them from bondage; God had parted the waters of the sea that they might safely pass over; he had sweetened the waters of Marah for them, and brought them to this mount in safety; here he had exhibited his awful majesty, in a form the most appalling—the most fitted to produce impressions, even on hearts as hard as Horeb rocks; and yet, while Sinai trembles and smokes, and awful thunder rolls; while the echoes of Jehovah's voice are yet pealing among the mountains; and while the terror that whitened their faces, and made their knees shake the one against the other, has scarce forsaken them, they demand an idol; they manufacture a calf out of the gold of their ear-rings, and dance around it in the madness of profane mirth. O man, thou art fallen by thy iniquity! pride ill becomes thee! If there is a spot on this sin-stained soil more lowly, more obscure than another, thither go and prostrate thyself before the most high God, and exclaim, "Unclean! unclean! woe is me!

for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips."

Not one good interest in humanity can be served, by pampering the pride of our nature, and yet nothing is more disrelished by the carnal man than allusions to his utter vileness. To yield to this weakness in him is cruelty; inasmuch as our giving him credit for being better than he is, does not actually make him so; and he is thereby tempted to think more highly of himself than he ought, and to be hurried into speech and action, by which his miseries are augmented and his difficulties increased. It is always best to tell the truth, however disagreeable it may be; for this tells best, alike on our own well-being and well-doing. Besides, the gospel remedy can never be valued nor applied while self-righteousness retains its seat in the human mind. The very first step to salvation is to become nothing in ourselves; to feel and own the truth of the depravity of our natures, and the worthlessness of our own works, and to rely with confidence on the righteousness of Christ for our acceptance before God. Happy is the man who is emptied of self; that man is soon to be full of Christ. But to be emptied of self, we must study the history of our fall, and of our fallen race. If we do this with docility of mind, guided in our researches by the word of God, we must be convinced that "the imagination of man's heart is only evil, and that continually;" that if left to ourselves, there is no extremity of sin to which we will not go; and that nothing is so sure of propitiating towards us the divine approbation, as to admit the need of divine grace to form within us every good thought, to teach our lips every good word, and to lead our feet into the way of every good deed. "The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to

direct his steps." We are all "by nature children of wrath." "Behold, we were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mothers conceive us."

III. SINAI PROCLAIMS—HOW EXCELLENT IS THE LAW! —Given in such unusually sublime circumstances, amid all the pomp and grandeur of heaven's own fires and voices, we may surely infer that, in God's estimation, it is indeed most just and good in itself, and most worthy of the love and obedience of mankind. Emanating, as it did, directly from Jehovah, it bears the impress of his absolute perfections. It is the moral image of God, and therefore we need not be surprised, if it shall enact, that not one jot or tittle of it shall be permitted to pass away. All shall be fulfilled. True, we must make proper distinctions between what is moral and what is civil and ritual in that law. Its judicial enactments and its ceremonies have passed away, because they were designed for the preparatory dispensation. The moral law, however, remains; the ten commandments are not obsolete, and obsolete they cannot be made, even by the introduction of the gospel. Before its dawn, rites and types fled away; but not the moral law. The author and finisher of our faith came not "to destroy, but to fulfil" the law and the prophets. He obeyed the whole of that law in his own life, not only that he might thereby provide a righteousness for his people, but that he might show them an example. Hence the apostle, in vindicating the doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, exclaims, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law;" that is, by the gospel we place on a firm and unmovable basis the whole of the ten commandments; every one of them remains in its old place which it occupied originally in the hearts of our first parents in

Eden, and afterwards on the two tablets of stone given to Moses on Sinai.

If this be so, well may we inquire, how it is that some are so foolhardy as to point the finger of scorn at the fourth of these commandments, and demand its erasure from the divine code? It appears to be an axiom, that if such a liberty can be lawfully taken with the fourth, a similar liberty may be taken with any of the other nine. This position is not at all weakened by the circumstance that the Christian church has moved the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week. We do not, and never can, properly argue, that the Lawgiver himself is not at liberty to make any alterations that may please him on his own laws. This he can do, and this he has done, with respect to the mere time of observing the Sabbath. He himself, after his resurrection, evidently changed the day. He gave no countenance whatever to the Jewish Sabbath, but uniformly made his appearance, during the forty days he remained on the earth previous to his ascension, on "the first day of the week;" hence it was called by the inspired apostles, "the Lord's-day;" and hence, also, these holy men, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, continued the observance of the Sabbath on the first day of every week. If we err, then, we err with those whose testimony, in far weightier matters, we implicitly trust; even in matters that lie at the very foundations of our belief as disciples of Christ.

IV. Sinai proclaims—How imperative is man's obedience!—Think of the Lawgiver, and think of the law itself; then say, is it safe to oppose the one or transgress the other? God is opposed when his law is broken; and God is as angry with transgressors now as when he rushed, in righteous indignation,

from Sinai's fiery heights, and slew thousands of his people. All calamities, including "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," and "the destruction that wasteth at noon-day;" the monetary and commercial panics by which credit is paralysed, trade ruined, and the people reduced to starvation; are just as clearly the indications of his anger at sin, as were the blood-stained swords of the sons of Levi in the camp of Israel, or the horrid and loathsome plague which subsequently destroyed those who had escaped the edge of the sword. We, however, who live under the light of the gospel, have a still more striking manifestation of God's regard for his law, and of his hatred for sin. We have it, not in the sharp swords of Levi's sons, but we have it in the unsheathed sword of justice when it struck the man that was God's fellow, and bathed itself in the blood of "the only-begotten of the Father." In that awful work of the ninth hour upon Calvary, the ancient insignia of the law, when promulgated from Sinai, partially re-appeared. There, when the Saviour was making the atonement, the darkness, the lightning, the earthquake, and other indications of Jehovah's holiness, made the spectators tremble. The incarnation—indeed, the obedience and death of Jesus Christ—may all be traced to God's love of his own law; a law, injury to which he could not possibly overlook or pardon, except by such a tribute to its intrinsic worth, and his inflexible righteousness, as should even more fully glorify it, than if its transgressors had been allowed to perish. Let us never forget, that by this law we are all bound, and more bound than ever, to abide, now that Christ has died, and, in his life and death, magnified and made it honorable. While we cannot be too thankful, that our obedience to it is not in any sense the ground of our acceptance

with God; not in any sense a title to our pardon and salvation; let us never forget, that whenever that salvation is ours, we are more than ever obligated to "fear God and keep his commandments," which remains still the whole duty of man. Yea, we are not only more obligated than ever, but more than ever disposed to do so; for it is not till we are saved through the faith of Christ that we come to love and obey the law. His love constrains us to keep it. He died, and "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

V. SINAI PROCLAIMS—HOW GLORIOUS IS THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL!—Let it not be imagined, when we speak of a contrast, that anything depreciatory of the law is intended. It is simply meant to express the warm and grateful emotions of the believer, in hearing from the gospel that there is pardon provided for those who have broken the law, and lie under its curse; that though by the works of the law no flesh living can now be justified, yet is there justification secured to every one who appropriates, by faith, the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It detracts not from the intrinsic excellence of the law, that sinners now tremble before its just and inflexible requirements. It has not abated, and it cannot abate, one jot of its precepts. No comfort, then, can be conveyed by the law to the transgressors. It is in this light, and in this only, that we wish to view the gospel contrasted with the law, inasmuch as the gospel reveals deliverance from its penalties, provides grace to help us in observing its precepts, and, at the same time that it continues that law to us as a rule of life, entirely frees us from it as a covenant. Thus contemplated, how glorious is the con-

trast between the two! Let the Christian run over in his mind a few of these points of contrast, and he cannot fail to see his superior privilege in living under the new dispensation; "for the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

The law came in the midst of terror-striking phenomena. The gospel was announced by an angel, in the stillness of the evening hour, to a few shepherds, on the plains of Bethlehem. Clouds and darkness were about the one; light and peace were about the other. The one made the earth to shake for fear; the other caused it to rejoice with exceeding great joy. The one was delivered in fire and thunder; the other was heralded, on the day of pentecost, by the descent of the Holy Ghost in fiery tongues on the apostles. The fires of Sinai were accompanied with smoke; but the fires of the gospel were without smoke, "befitting the clearness of the new dispensation, fire, not in flashes, but in tongues, not to terrify, but to instruct." The mount itself was strictly protected, and it was on peril of life if it was even touched, while only to a very few was the honor given of ascending so far up its rugged sides, and only to one was it permitted to come near to God on its summit. In the gospel, however, no cordon of any description forbids our approach to Zion; not only may the mount be approached and touched, but to the God whose glory rests upon it, we may all draw near; and not only may all draw near to him, but even he himself may be touched. The hem of his garment was touched by the diseased woman, and his very lips received the embrace of Judas Iscariot. The law encompasses itself with numerous and dire menaces; but the gospel pours forth gracious and soul-encouraging promises. The law says, "The soul that sinneth it shall die;"

the gospel says, "Whosoever believeth in the Son of God hath everlasting life." The law frowns upon the sinner; the gospel smiles upon him. The law strikes, the gospel binds up the wound. The law shuts to the door; the gospel opens it. The law "still has within itself the ancient fires in which it was uttered, hence the flashes which it still darts into guilty consciences; the gospel has in it no fires, but it sends forth its light and its truth, gently and softly, as the orient rays move upon the awakening earth. The one thunders wrath; the other whispers mercy. On Sinai the Lord God is hid from the view of Israel by the dense smoke that enveloped it; but in the gospel, he comes forth all radiant in love. He is seen in Christ, who is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." The law entailed heavy and expensive ceremonies; the gospel calls us to a yoke that is easy, and to a burden that is light. The law was for one nation; the gospel is for the whole world. The law sought to do its work by fear; the gospel by love. The terrors of Sinai wrought no saving change on the depraved hearts of the men of Israel—they made a calf and worshipped it while God was speaking; but when the still small voice of the gospel was heard, thousands were born in one day to the Lord; and ere the end come, by the power of that gospel, "every knee shall bow," and, "every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

VI. Sinai proclaims—How necessary for gospel hearers to weigh well their responsibilities, and to improve their privileges!—Whoever studies the advantages of the gospel, contrasted with the previous legal dispensation, must be satisfied of the increased obligations under which Christians lie, to walk worthy

of their high vocation. If we have more light, we are expected to do more work; and if we have less external ceremony to occupy the mind, we are bound to cultivate more the gifts and graces by which the inner man of the heart can be elevated and enriched. We have a completed revelation, and upon us have come the ends of the world. Let us see to it, then, that we carefully husband our privileges and go on to perfection. The present dispensation is not to be set aside, till the final consummation of all things. We are, therefore, called upon to employ the providences and ordinances of God, for the wider promotion of his glory in it, and our own spiritual improvement. We do not require to wade through clouds and shadows, in order to realize the great things of salvation. These are clearly unfolded to us in the finished work of Christ. No pompous ritual detains us from the altar and sacrifice of atonement. We have neither to remain under tutors and governors, nor under the law itself, as a taskmaster to bring us to Christ. We are placed by the gospel, as it were, within the holy of holies at once. We are all invited to become kings and priests unto God; and a new and living way is opened up for us direct to the Father. We have attained our majority, and it is consequently expected of us that we manifest the manliness, and bring forth the matured fruit, of a full Christian stature. God looks to us that we bring forth grapes. It was a serious thing to enjoy the comparatively superior light of the Mosaic economy. Israel's responsibilities were greatly increased by the revelations of Sinai; and from that day forward, to the winding up of the law, the people of God were more amenable to his displeasure when they refused to walk by his revealed will. But it is a much more serious thing to live under the wings of the Sun

of Righteousness, because in an emphatic and solemn sense, no more remains to be done for the church than what has been done.

If men, then, would but reflect on what God has done for them, and remember that he most righteously demands of them that they act up to their light, surely they "would give the most earnest heed to the things which they have heard, lest at any time they should let them slip." Impartial retributions will be given in the day of judgment. The heathen who have sinned without law, shall then be judged without law. It will then be more tolerable, not only for the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, but for the ancient Jews themselves, than for us, to whom the word of God's great salvation has been sent, if we despise it. This principle of adjudication will be most inflexibly adhered to, whether we are wise or whether we scorn, whether we hear or whether we will forbear. Some idea of the appalling concomitants of the last day's procedure, may be formed from the terrific displays of the divine majesty on Sinai. But, then, instead of God appearing in cloud and fire, he will come in visible form, and "every eye shall see him." Instead of the thousands of Israel, will be gathered before him "all nations." Instead of the promulgation of the law, the demand will be, How has that law been obeyed? Instead of the construction of typical or gospel ordinances, will be the enthronement of the great Mediator, to test every man's work. Not even will the gospel tidings be heralded then, for both the book of the law and the book of the gospel will be shut. The only book to be opened will be that of the Judge's remembrances; and instead of the man Moses being summoned to stand before the Judge, every man will be called upon to answer for "the things done in his body, according

to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Careless and unbelieving sinners! you will then come to all our conclusions anent your weighty responsibilities. You will then repent, and pray, and believe; but your faith will not save you, your prayers will not be heard, your repentance is too late. The sword of divine vengeance slew the men who insulted Jehovah at the foot of Sinai; and then, that same weapon will execute vengeance tenfold more destructive on you, who continue to resist and rebel within the very walls of Zion. Be wise in time; be instructed ye foolish ones. We beseech you, have done with tampering with eternal interests. Let this world and all its vanities sink into insignificance in your eyes; live under the powers of the world to come. Make God your chief joy, and seek your happiness in his friendship. At present you can secure every blessing, without exception, for which God's Son shed his blood. You have not far to travel for any one of them, even the most precious. O, how near they are to the chief of sinners! But, remember, that very nearness aggravates your guilt, if you refuse to approach and appropriate. You cannot reasonably calculate on God's treating with indifference what cost him so much to procure for you; what he has labored to induce you to accept, and what you have recklessly continued to despise. By every hour you live in impenitence and unbelief, you are the more hardening your hearts, the more increasing in amount and degree the difficulty of your conversion, and the more certainly "treasuring up unto yourselves wrath against the day of wrath." You are manufacturing many and bitter elements of wretchedness for a dying hour, for a sick bed, for a final judgment, and for an endless eternity. Your reliances on the general mercy of God, at that day, are

exceedingly infatuated and daring, for God has forewarned you that his mercy will then be "clean gone forever."

How blissful, on the other hand, shall their state and privileges be, who, while they obey the great gospel commandment, and believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, also "walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless!" Even now, in the very exercise of such faith, and in these very acts of obedience, they may be said to enjoy the foretastes of the celestial felicity; "for," says the apostle of all such, "ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: but ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

# MOUNT HOR,

AND

# THE DEATH OF THE HIGH PRIEST.

Aaron, the first high priest of Israel, was the brother of Moses. He was eighty-three years of age on the return of the latter to Egypt from Arabia. One of Moses' objections to undertake the leadership of the Israelites, was his not "being eloquent, but of slow speech and slow tongue." The angel met the objection, by informing him that Aaron was to be associated with him in that work, and that he should be his "spokesman." Accordingly, from this time, they went hand in hand in the work to which they were consecrated. Though thus collegiated, however, they were men of very dissimilar traits of character. Aaron had certainly many excellences, but Moses was, in every point of view, his superior. "He does not seem," as one remarks, "so much above the follies and prejudices of his age. He was more a man of the times, subject to passing influences and prevailing tastes. Moses, on the contrary, was one of those rare characters in history which seem to live in the past, present, and future. Reviewing the good that has been, understanding the full drift and scope of the present, he at the same time comprehends and lives in the

future. Such a man the ardor of hope never beguiles into scorn of the past, nor over-reverence of the present. Like those mountain summits which first catch the sunlight, he rises out of the darkness and prejudice below him, heralding the day that is approaching. Neither does Aaron seem borne up and onward by so lofty a feeling as he. With mind less strong, he lacked also the enthusiasm of his brother. Yet he must have possessed rare gifts to have been chosen the companion and fellow-laborer of Moses; he must have possessed an elevation and purity of character far above his fellows, to have been chosen as the founder of the Jewish priesthood; the first to minister at the altar, and to represent a sacerdotal dynasty more glorious and more immortal than the line even of David, or any successor of kings that ever filled a throne." The office of high priest, to which Aaron was elevated, was the first of its kind. He was invested with it, in due solemnity, immediately after the promulgation of the law and the consequent setting up of the tabernacle. The chief duties of his office were, to offer sacrifices upon the altar, and to intercede for the people. Its importance lay in its typical character. Aaron was the type of the great High Priest of our profession. His annual sacrifices of atonement, his intercession, and his appearance at the specified periods before the shechina, all prefigured the propitiation and advocacy of our Lord and Saviour, and his appearance in the presence of God for us. Everything, indeed, about the ordinance of the priesthood partook of this typical property. The laws that related to the persons of the priests, to their priestly garments, to their consecration, and to their official duties, sufficiently demonstrate this. Exalted, however, as Aaron was, in respect of office, he was not exempt from the infirmities

of our nature. "At the waters of strife he was betrayed into anger, self-conceit and presumption; in the matter of the golden calf he is chargeable with timidity and sinful compliance, with unkindness and ingratitude to one of the best of brothers, with impiety towards God, and with dissimulation bordering on falsehood. Even after his consecration to the priesthood he exhibited the contemptible passion of envy at, and jealousy of, his brother, to whom he was indebted for all that eminence to which he was himself raised, and which he transmitted to his family." For these sins, however, he was corrected in the wilderness. That he repented of them all we cannot doubt, and that they were all forgiven is certain. There were some striking passages in his life. Before we go up with him to Hor, to witness his remarkable decease, let us simply glance at one of these, which furnishes a solemn proof of the divine displeasure with him for these sins, and which at the same time supplies us with some instructive reflections.

## PART I.

### PASSAGE IN THE LIFE OF AARON.

#### NADAB AND ABIHU—THEIR SIN—THEIR AWFUL DEATH—REFLECTIONS—AARON'S RESIGNATION.

Aaron had two sons. They were associated with him in the duties of the high priest's office. Upon a certain occasion, the scripture narrative informs us,*

* Lev. x. 1—8.

these sons, "Nadab and Abihu, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them; and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This it is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." It appears from this that these two men, though consecrated to the service of God, were not good men. Their sin was this: they "offered strange fire before the Lord." God had commanded, that the incense to be offered on the day of atonement, should be kindled by a portion of the perpetual fire which had at first descended from heaven, to consume the earliest victims which Aaron offered for a burnt-offering, and which had been burning on the altar ever since. Every other kind of fire was therefore unlawful; it was strange. Such forbidden fire, on the occasion referred to, had been used by Nadab and Abihu to kindle the incense which their office obliged them to burn, every evening and morning. Some imagine that their crime was the result of intemperance; that they had indulged in the "delicacies of the sacrifice" to a sinful excess; that they had impiously dared to go into the very holy of holies, into which none but their father was permitted to enter, and that only once every year, and that fire from the glorious shechina above the mercy-seat then instantly darted forth, and destroyed them; hence it is said, "They died before the Lord." Their sin, in itself very heinous, was greatly aggravated by their official character and rank. "They had seen the perfect exactness with which their illustrious uncle had constructed everything according to the pattern shown him in the mount, and the force of his example they resisted. They

could not be ignorant of their duty, and it was specially incumbent on them to set an example before the people of the strictest respect for the sanctity of the whole institution."

This must have been a very heavy trial to their aged father. The death of children at any period of life is to a parent the most distressing of bereavements. The consolations of the world are then useless, and to the hopes and precepts of the gospel we can alone look for support. When our children die in infancy, we have reason to be comforted concerning their safety. They pass immediately into glory. Washed in the blood of Christ, they are, at the very same moment that they are torn from the maternal bosom, rejoicing in the bosom of the blessed Jesus. What mother would be so cruel as to wish them back again? Let them abide in their heavenly refuge; let them remain in the heavenly choir; and let their sweet voices be attuned to the music of the heavenly song! Yes, they are safe forever, and what more should we wish for them? They have got all for which the Son of God shed his blood. Let them enjoy it. Why should we selfishly wish to recall them to this scene of sin and misery? Or, if no such wish is expressed, why should we refuse to be comforted because they are not? Similar consolation awaits the parent who commits to the grave the dust of some beloved son or daughter who may have reached the years of maturity, but whose life had afforded unequivocal proofs of piety. The affliction here is no doubt heavy, inasmuch as we have to mourn over the greater loss of matured excellences. Still, we do not mourn like those "who have no hope." We saw them growing in grace; we marked those meek but certain signs of saintship which told of their adoption into the fam-

ily of God. We congratulated ourselves, and our Christian friends also congratulated us, on having such children; and we were happy in the thought, that their eternal interests were safe. And now they are gone before us. We had hoped that they should have tended our dying pillow, closed our eyes in death, followed our "dust to the dust," and perpetuated to another generation our good name and services in the cause of God. But he has willed it otherwise, and we resigned our spirit to his will. We know that he had work for them in heaven, else they would not have been called up so soon; we therefore comfort ourselves with the conviction of their perfect happiness elsewhere, and with the hope of meeting them again in that better land.

But who or what shall comfort that parent, whose children die in advanced life, without having given any evidence of a justified state? Above all, what shall sustain them whose children have been hurried into eternity by their own sinful provocations of the Almighty? Surely, if ever sorrow is allowable, it must be in such a case as this; if ever it can be lawful to refuse to be comforted, it must be now. This, then, was Aaron's case. His sons were hopeful men; men whom God had honored by associating them with their father in sacred duties; men that had ascended Sinai when the glory of the Lord encompassed it; and men that had seen God upon that dreadful occasion; for it is written, "and they saw the God of Israel." No doubt the aged father would be expecting that, when he died, upon the head of the eldest of these his mitre would be placed; and every mean would be employed to inform him of the duties of the high priest's office. It is not easy, then, for us to conceive the extent or degree of the affliction of that father,

when, supposing this view to be correct, he entered within the veil, and saw the dead bodies of his two sons prostrate in the holy of holies "before the Lord," before the ark and the mercy-seat. There lay the blighted carcases of the half of his family, of his first and darling hopes, cut off in the prime of life, cut off in the moment of awful impiety, and by the indignant fire of Jehovah! Aaron gazed in the agony of grief upon that harrowing sight; and, peradventure, in giving way to that grief, had he been permitted, he too might have enkindled the fire of God against himself. But as he looked, with tears, it may be, streaming down his breast-plate, and with hands wrung in the anguish of his soul, he hears a footstep, and commands himself. Moses draws near. The judgment of the Lord had been hastily communicated to him, and he came to the sanctuary. Calm and unmoved he addresses his stricken brother, instructs him to remain where he is, and not to touch the dead bodies, neither to follow them out of the tabernacle, neither to utter one word of lamentation over what had taken place. He is instantly obeyed. The bodies are raised, and carried away out of the camp "in the coats of the sons of Uzziel, as Moses had said."

And how did Aaron behave himself in such a case? The Scripture tells us in most expressive language: "And Aaron held his peace." That is, he was dumb; he opened not his mouth, no, not so much as to allow the deep-drawn sigh of paternal agony to escape. What a sublime instance have we here, of resignation to the will of God! We are not at liberty to suppose that his silence was the result of stupor from the suddenness and awfulness of the stroke; much less are we to set it down to the want of natural affection, or to any indifference about their fate. He retained his

self-possession, and was fully alive to the appalling judgment which had descended on them. He "held his peace," and, obeying the commandment of God, he went about all the duties of his office that same day, as if nothing strange had occurred. Behold that illustrious high priest, in these circumstances, conducting the services of the sanctuary with meek and unruffled composure! We can scarce conceive of a father restraining himself thus. Amongst men in general no such magnificent control of the natural affections is ever seen. Contrariwise, the flood-gates of feeling are opened, and the passions rush forth in unmanageable confusion. It is painful to realize it; we refer to it only to give emphasis to the divine requirement, that we take care of the heart in the hour of sorrowful bereavement. Aaron's was a case in which no comfort could be taken, consequently no comfort was tendered to him. It was indeed an unmitigated affliction, notwithstanding he "held his peace." How are we to account for it? It was manifestly the doing of God, and it did not therefore become him even to appear to be dissatisfied; it was necessary for the preservation of the sanctity of the divine ordinances, which had been profaned in the eyes of Israel; and it was the punishment due to himself for his own sin in the making of the golden calf. Considerations such as these imposed upon him silence. Remembering his past sins, he bowed his head to the chastening of the Lord. Let us go and do likewise. However much of human weakness Aaron may have discovered on other occasions, he certainly shines forth in this as a bright example to us all. If it would have been wrong and sinful in him to have repined under the rod, and such a rod, how much more sinful is it in us to be angry, or to act as if we were angry, with God

when he visits us with similar trials? Let us bear in mind that we are not chastised with the severity that we deserve, and that the sins of which we have been guilty are the causes of many of our severest tribulations. Better far to receive the punishment due to these sins in this life than to enjoy uninterrupted comfort here, and meet the wrath of God where it must be endured forever.

In a very few years after this, and shortly after the decease of his sister Miriam, Aaron is himself summoned to lay down his high office, and with his office, his life. Before adverting to the solemn scenes of that occasion, it may not be uninteresting to pay a visit to the mountain itself, where he breathed out his spirit.

## PART II.

### THE DEATH OF THE HIGH PRIEST.

MOUNT HOR—THE ASCENT OF MOSES, AARON, AND ELEAZAR—DEATH OF AARON—REFLECTIONS.

It is written, "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there.*

Mount Hor is in the same country with Sinai, though not in the same neighborhood. It forms one

* Numbers xx. 22—29.

of the chain of mountains called in scripture "the mountains of Seir," which reach from the bottom of the Dead Sea down to the top of the gulf of Akaba. Seir is in the land of Idumea, or Edom, to which Esau retired from the presence of his brother Jacob. This range separates Arabia Petrea from the eastern deserts of sand: they are ten or twelve leagues in width, and have a very stern and dark appearance. Lord Lindsay speaks of them as "the black mountains from which the Edomites looked down." Another traveller thus writes: "The land of Idumea lay before me in barrenness and desolation; no trees grew in the valley, and no verdure on the mountain tops. All was bare, dreary, and desolate." Of this long range of mountains, Hor is the tallest summit, and is a towering landmark to the wanderer afar off. It is said that though Sinai be nearly 150 miles farther south, it can be seen from the top of Hor; and Petra, the famous capital of the Edomites, is supposed to have been in its immediate neighborhood. The place where it is said Aaron was buried is at present inclosed by a small modern building, crowned with a cupola, such as usually covers the remains of modern saints. It now gets the name of Jebal Haroun, the mountain of Aaron, and is of very difficult and steep ascent.

Dr. Wilson and his friends recently reached the summit with great difficulty. He thus writes: "After the greatness and peril of the effort which we had been compelled to make, we should, in ordinary circumstances, have been elated with our success; but the wild sublimity, and grandeur, and terror of the new and wonderful scene around and underneath us, overawed our souls. We were seated on the very throne, as it appeared to us, of Desolation itself. Its own metropolis of broken, and shattered, and frowning

heights—ruin piled upon ruin, and dark and devouring depth added to depth, lay on our right hand and on our left. To the rising sun, mount Seir, the pride and the glory of Edom, and the terror of its adversaries, lay before us, smitten in its length and breadth by the hand of the Almighty, stretched out against it, barren and most desolate, with its daughter, the 'city of Merock,' overthrown and prostrate at its feet. To the west we had the great and terrible wilderness, with its deserts, and pits, and droughts, spread out before us, without any limit but its own vastness, and pronounced by God himself to be the very 'shadow of death.' It was the type and representative to us of that day of the Lord in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up."

The same writer also mentions that he entered into what is reputed to be the tomb of the high priest of Israel, which he describes to be nothing more "than a small Mahommedan mosque of no great antiquity. The door, which is at the west corner, is raised about two feet, and it is about four feet high, exclusive of the arch, above which is an arc of a wall. The wall is strongly built of red sandstone, about four feet thick. The roof, which is flat, rests upon two rows of double arches of the Saracenic form. The area within is eleven paces by nine and a half. At its north end there is a Mahommedan sepulchre of the ordinary length. It has a stone in front with an Arabic inscription. Four little marble pillars, of unequal workmanship, were at the end of the tomb." The range of Seir, of which Hor seems to be the central elevation, is supposed to be about 3,500 feet above the plains beneath. "It is of white chalk, and its strata, rising

in many places in successive terraces, have the appearance of dipping to the east. It embosoms on three sides the purple, and orange, and rose-colored sandstone, forming the natural walls of Petra, and the body and crags of Mount Hor itself, and extends to a distance on the west, strangely diversified in its hue and shading by the eruptions of granite, porphyry, and basalt."

In their wanderings towards Canaan, the children of Israel had at length reached the valley from which this mountain rose, and they encamped before it. There was a reason for this. Their high priest was to die and be buried on its summit. Neither Moses nor Aaron, nor any of those who had rebelled against God's word at the waters of Meribah, were to be permitted to enter the promised land. The time drew nigh for crossing the Jordan and taking possession of the country, and the leading actors in the scenes of the last forty years must fall, and leave their carcases in the wilderness. Hundreds and thousands had already died; very few, indeed, of that generation who had come up out of Egypt remained. The time had come when the leaders themselves must also submit to the stroke of death. Aaron, by the commandment of God, is the first to take his departure, and the manner in which this was done is singularly affecting. Moses was instructed to take Aaron and his son Eleazar, and bring them to the top of Hor; there to strip Aaron of his official garments, and put them upon his son, who was to succeed him; and then he was to die, and "be gathered to his people." All this was done, and done, too, in the sight of the congregation. Moses might not inform them that they were never to see their high priest again; but in the recollection of what they had beheld on Sinai, they might expect that God would

again make some imposing manifestation of his glory. They gazed upon the three men, then, as they wended their way up the steep and rough ascent, and wondered when and how Jehovah would appear; but no display, such as that which was made on Sinai, was made on Hor. The scene itself, however, is really a commanding one. Witness three such men, in the perfect knowledge of what was going to happen, so cheerfully and promptly bidding adieu for a time to the camp, one of them never to return, and that one the high priest. They have made the ascent, and now they stand on the summit of the mountain. No delay takes place. Moses at once approaches his brother, who again "held his peace." Without the least opposition, he permits himself to be stripped of his gorgeous robes, and though submissive not unconcerned, witnesses the investiture of Eleazar. This ceremony finished, the two brothers, so long associated in office, and so soon and so affectingly to be parted, await in silence and awe the approach of God.

What a moment of suspense would this be! It is difficult to say which of the three would feel it most. To Moses, his brother had been of eminent service in the government of Israel. He might remember some of Aaron's infirmities; but these would instantly be forgotten in the rush of other thoughts, which rekindled from memory's lamp the lights that had illumined the path of the first high priest of Israel, even from the days when together they had confronted the monarch of Egypt, to the present moment of sublime resignation to the will of God. Aaron again, now looks down the mountain side to the plain beneath, that he might for the last time behold the goodly tents of Jacob and the tabernacles of Israel. What a tumult of thoughts would the view occasion! Having

surveyed, for a time, this interesting spectacle, he turns to his illustrious brother, and fixes on him a look of inexpressible emotion. The recollection of his foolish envyings of Moses' distinctions might suggest some little regret. If so, the feeling would soon pass away in the joyous conviction, not only that all had been forgiven between them, but that even with the God of Israel he was now at peace, and would be soon in glory.

The newly-inaugurated high priest, meanwhile, stands apart, a silent but not uninterested spectator. He loved and honored his venerable sire ; he submitted to see him, for the first time, denuded of his pontifical robes, and, in amazement, beheld them put upon himself. The ceremony told him that the death of his father was at hand, and that he should occupy that father's place among the nobles of Israel ; but the sadness of the occasion interfered to repress the joys of succession. It is far from Eleazar, however, to feel or express a murmur. He, too, prepares his spirit to witness in adoring acquiescence, Aaron's sublime and impressive decease. And now these three men kneel in prayer ; they have embraced each other for the last time, and stand together in expectation of the summons that was to carry the devoted one into the immediate presence of God. Moses and Eleazar steadfastly contemplate Aaron, whose attitude and aspect bespeak the approaching awful solemnity. As they watch his heaven-lit countenance, behold, it changes ! The high priest falls ; he is dead ! His soul is gathered to its people !

Such was the latter end of Israel's first high priest. How appropriate such a conclusion to his life ! At the base of one mountain Aaron had yielded to human weakness, and scandalized the religion of his fathers,

in giving countenance to the golden calf; but here, on the summit of another, he manifests the power of faith, and contributes largely to the glory of Jehovah, in resigning at once office and life at his command. A dying scene like this disposes us to forget, that the infirmities of our nature had left their usual stains upon his previous walk. Thus, while the best of men often come short, it is sometimes granted to them, ere they leave this world, to repair the breaches they have made, to redeem some of the time they have lost, and by one dying scene, to do more for the credit of their religion than all their former good works ever accomplished.

We should learn from this, not to pursue the falls of good men into scandalous sins, with too severe discipline. When evidence of repentance is manifested, when subsequent zeal and activity prove its genuineness, their sins ought to be forgiven by their fellow-believers, and they themselves ought to be treated as if no such clouds had ever rested on their good names. By this tender and just restoration of confidence, we not only commend the doctrines of Christianity, as breathing mercy and love amongst brethren, but we secure their services more devotedly than ever to the side of truth and holiness. Aaron was made high priest after his fall at Sinai, and Peter became not the less efficient an apostle, that he had repented and been forgiven "the iniquity of his sin" in the palace of Caiaphas. It is said that young converts are generally most zealous in propagating truth. We believe it. But, on the same principle, it ought to be conceded that a repentant brother, when forgiven alike by God and man, is almost certain to labor more abundantly to recommend and diffuse the principles of our most holy faith. David sinned heinously in the matter of

Uriah the Hittite; but he repented and was forgiven. What was the consequence? He was more devoted than ever to God and to Israel. How significant of this are some of the clauses in the penitential psalm composed on the occasion referred to: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit: then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee!" No doubt the son of Jesse was as often praying on his knees as playing on his harp, and the God of Israel would be ever uppermost in these prayers. We question, however, if his earnestness on behalf of Zion, previous to his fall, was so intense as it became after his restoration. Then, with peculiar emphasis, he is heard imploring Jehovah, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem."

In cases like David's, a constant and persevering piety afterwards, is perhaps a more striking illustration of the power of God's grace in the heart, than the ordinary walk of the man whose feet have never slipped. In applying these remarks, however, to the case of office-bearers in the church of Christ, great care must be taken, lest, in our amiable efforts after reconciliation, we rashly commit the real welfare of our brother, and the credit of religion, to be carried away in the stream of a baneful latitudinarianism. It must be allowed that what God can do, without the possibility of injury to his own cause or our interests, ought not to be ventured upon by us, until we have well examined, not only the spirit of the penitent, but our own spirits in their proposals to pardon and restore him. But prosecuting these views under the control of wise, considerate, and Christian principles, we are almost sure of protecting the credit of our religion, while we extend forbearance and privilege to the sorrowing and re-

formed transgressor. In such cases, we may, in their issue, have the splendors of Hor to set over against the humiliations of Sinai.

We cannot descend from this mountain top, without one glance at another decease of a still more solemn and overawing character. Aaron was but the type of a more enduring High Priest, even Jesus Christ. How singular the contrast between the one scene on Hor and the other on Calvary! Aaron's last moments were passed in tranquillity, honor, and hope; the blessed Jesus died in the midst of execrations and agony. The "type" disappeared between two of his nearest and dearest relations; the "substance" gave up the ghost between two notorious criminals! But when faith studies these two deaths, it quickly discerns the superiority, in every respect, of the antitypical scene. Aaron was here stripped of his robes and denuded of his office. His eyes, ere they closed in death, saw his successor. His decease, in itself, had not even the typical properties of those sacrifices of bulls and goats over which he had often presided. It was in no sense even a shadow of "the decease which was accomplished at Jerusalem." His body was buried where it fell, and there its dust may still repose. The character he sustained to the church, and the office he held, together with the whole economy to which they appertained, have long ere this passed away, and are never to re-appear. The reverse of all this holds true of our Lord. When he died, he secured for himself from that moment the everlasting possession of the offices of prophet, priest, and king to his church. His death was the atonement for sin. In it he laid the foundation of that heavenly Jerusalem whose palaces and towers are to endure forever. When he rose from the dead (for God did not "suffer

his Holy One to see corruption,") he "ascended up on high," entered into the holy of holies, and hath forever "sat down at the right hand of the Father." "Jesus was made a surety of a better covenant. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." In this divine arrangement believers may have perfect confidence. Their High Priest is with God. His sacrifice has been accepted once for all. His advocacy is ever prevalent. His sympathy is always certain. And their future admission into his blessed presence is as sure as "the word of the oath" can make it.

## PART III.

### THE LESSONS FROM HOR.

DEATH—ITS CERTAINTY—GOOD MEN ONLY DIE SAFELY—THE VALUE OF THE GOSPEL.

The affecting scene we have just contemplated reminds us,—

I. THAT WE MUST ALL DIE!—This is perhaps the only truth connected with revelation that infidelity itself cannot, and does not dispute. He must be insane who would do so. Notwithstanding, it is a truth which is deplorably disregarded by most men. They live as if it were not true that they must all die. To

the universal belief that it is the common lot, may be traced its failure in producing appropriate seriousness. This makes it all the more necessary that we now and then fix attention upon the subject, so as to become "wise, and understand this, and consider our latter end." If, then, we animadvert for a little on death as certain, and certain to all, it is not because man requires to have it proved to him that he is mortal, but because he needs to have his mind deeply filled with such a conviction. To produce and maintain it is indeed a service to humanity; for O, how many adverse influences are at work, to lull the dying creature to sleep, and to make him live as if he were never to die; as if all were mortal except himself! The world, the devil, and the flesh combine to harden his mind to the force of a truth which, notwithstanding, he sees verified every day in the passing funeral. Such, indeed, is the miserable indifference that prevails among men upon this subject, that we are almost justified in taking it for granted, that they do not believe that they are to fall under its stroke, and in proceeding to reason with them accordingly.

And what shall we say to such? We tell them to consider this: that ever since the fall of Adam death has invaded the world and converted it into one immense grave, into which he has, with contemptuous indiscrimination, cast the generations that are gone before. That grave still yawns, and ever opens its mouth insatiably for more. "Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?" Our fathers sleep in dust, and the prophets' harps are long since hung upon the willows. And you, too, who now ponder these things, must follow in that solemn procession to the tomb. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Your bodies are so constructed

that dissolution would come though they were not exposed to the accidents of life and actual disease. Sin now "reigns in your mortal bodies." It lives in them at the end, as well as at the beginning of a long life. At some period the wages of sin must be paid. We must die, and become the food of worms, the victims of corruption, and kindred with the clay. This is the end of it, whatever may have been the character of life's progress; whether joyous or grievous; whether spent in the giddy dances of worldly honor and prosperity, or in the joyless regions of poverty and wretchedness; whether useful or useless; whether devoted to God or devoted to the devil; this is the end of it—all die, and all must die. There is no escaping; from this war there is no discharge. Out of the many generations of men that have appeared and disappeared, two only have been exempted from its stroke; but, excepting those that shall be found alive at the last day, we have no reason to expect that any others shall be similarly privileged. Yes, the gates of death all must, and all do approach. There monarchs lay aside crowns and sceptres, doff gold and purple, abdicate kingdoms, and enter the grave as naked as when they entered the world. There the squalid and starving wretch, whose whole existence has been pensioned on the coldness of charity, finds a last relief; he lays down his rags, his burdens, his needs, and suffers earthly pain no more. There philosophy is arrested in the midst of its most sublime and successful researches, and receives a sure quietus to all its careful and perplexing thoughts. There beauty in her smiles, and deformity in her tears, lie down together, soon to be commingled in indistinguishable dust. There the sinner who has lived far from God, and the saint who has walked with God—strange encounter!—meet to

tread the same dismal path, and ford the same swelling Jordan. No exception breaks the dull monotony; all are promiscuously hurried off the stage of life, and laid without order in the gloomy mausoleum. Vain and inconstant world! Fleeting and transient life! when will the sons of men learn to think of thee as they ought, to prize their opportunities as they should, and to draw their hearts from thee as they must? How appropriate to this subject are the weighty words of Sir Walter Raleigh: "O, eloquent, just, and mighty death! whom none could advise thou hast persuaded; what none hath dared thou hast done; and, where all would have flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised. Thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two little words, 'HIC JACET.'"

II. DEATH IS STINGLESS ONLY TO GOOD MEN!—To those who die *in* their sins, death is unquestionably an immeasurable evil. Any conceivable state of misery on this side of the grave is better far to them than that into which, after death, they immediately pass. Here there is always some modicum of earthly rest to mitigate the concomitant ills of man's weary pilgrimage. His condition, whatever it be, can never be considered one of absolute despair. Though he be reduced to the very dust, still he has life; and while there is life, there is hope. He gets pity, too; the pity of the kind and compassionate; and when there is pity, there may come relief. At the very worst, his woes are tolerable, and possibly they may be of short duration. It is true, alas, too true! that in the midst of the devastations of adversity, some reckon life a curse, and, to get quit of ills they have, they madly flee "to others that they know not of." Is not such suicide the worst form

of insanity? for nothing can be conceived more unreasonable than to risk the eternal loss of the soul, merely to escape a passing hurricane, or, it may be, an imaginary evil.

But in no case can death, to a good man, be set down as a loss. It is, in every sense of the word, a gain, a great and unspeakable gain. He could not have bettered his earthly condition by one hour's additional existence. His sins were pardoned at conversion; his nature has been meetened for heaven in sanctification; and his evidences of being "in Christ Jesus" have become so bright, by long and intimate communion with him, that death comes with a most welcome invitation to him, to go up and be glorified. No really justified man needs time in order to die in safety. He may require time to die more comfortably to himself, and perhaps more usefully for others; but as for his safety, it is of no consequence to him at what hour of the day or night he takes his leave of the world. Death to him is stingless; that is, the sting which makes death fatal to others, is in his case extracted.

An apostle says, "The sting of death is sin;" a saying which on many a death-bed has been awfully illustrated. But when death comes to a believer, it comes without sin; and if it comes without sin, it comes without danger to him. And what is meant by death coming without sin? It means that, to a good man, death comes having not the curse of sin in it; that curse is exhausted to every believer in the death of Christ. It is written that the "strength of sin is the law;" that is, the strength of the sting of death is the law. And how does the law strengthen this sting of death? It does so by coming to the soul that lies in sin, and demanding an obedience to its precepts which

has never been rendered, and a submission to its penalty which must now be made. How dreadful is the sense of sin in such circumstances! When the unpardoned sinner realizes death, is it to be wondered at, if he be abandoned to despair? Death comes to him with its sting, which is always fatal. An angry law, a law which has been recklessly violated, it may be during a long life, and in defiance of favorable providences and gracious ordinances, comes up to him, seizes him by the throat, and says, "Pay me that thou owest." Oh, how does such a demand dart a sting into a guilty conscience! The sinner is a spiritual bankrupt; he has nothing to pay; he has no righteousness of his own; and he has no interest in the righteousness of any other. What then must he do? The necessity is awful! it is appalling! but it cannot be avoided now; he must pay what he can, and that is, the penalty—eternal death!

Now, when this law comes to a dying Christian, it imparts no strength to sin, either as to his state or as to his experience, and this especially as to his state; for when it makes its demand of him, "pay me that thou owest," the believer is quite ready with his payment; he has had it lying beside him probably for a long, long time; in fact, he has just been waiting for this call of the law, and now he offers it not only the principal, but an unspeakably valuable amount of interest. He offers to its rules the obedience of their own Maker, the obedience of Jesus Christ; and he offers to its penalty the sufferings and death of the Son of God in the nature of man. The law, of course, is well pleased with such payment; for it is thus magnified, and made far more honorable than if the creature himself had obeyed it, or had been left under the infliction of its wrath forever. This sufficiently ac-

counts for the peaceful death of a saint. He feels no sting in it. He is a justified man through the imputation of Christ's righteousness. He knows this, he believes this; and he dies singing these beautiful words, "O Lord, I will praise thee; for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me!" Yes, die when that man may, he is quite safe; for there is no more "condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made them free from the law of sin and death."

Such considerations ought greatly to enhance to us the gospel of God. That we are all to die is true; but, apart from the consolatory revelations of the Bible, this truth would make life insupportable. With what tranquillity, however, can we now proceed to the grave! We know that there is a happy land beyond it, into which every Christian is immediately received; that this inheritance has been purchased for us by the precious blood of Christ; and that by the influences of the Holy Ghost, we are certain to be made fully meet for it, whenever God may call us hence. For this cheering and invigorating knowledge we are indebted to the gospel; not to reason nor to philosophy, but to the glorious gospel of the ever-blessed God. Dearly, then, should we prize it, very grateful should we be for it, and very diligently should we study it. That gospel is the best counsellor, even for this world, inasmuch as it enables us "to exercise ourselves unto godliness," which godliness, the apostle says, "is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is," as well as "of that which is to come." For *temporal* ends, then, alone, it is invaluable. But there is no term of human existence so richly to be

prized by unbelieving man, as its closing periods. Too often is the great work of preparation for eternity delayed till then, when into a few days or hours it is attempted to crush that which ought to have been the business of a lifetime. The gospel, then, even at that late hour, is still at hand, offering its services, and proving that, as the friend of sinners, it is faithful even unto death.

To the believer, who has been considering and preparing for his latter end, it provides light for the dark valley, the staff of divine promise for the tottering and feeble step, the influence of hope for a sure and steadfast anchor to the soul, and the foretaste of heaven as an earnest of approaching glory. For the unbeliever, also, who has sinfully procrastinated till now the work which was given him to do, this gospel, if he wishes to be saved, is, and must be, his last resort. Health, wealth, fame, and friends, may all have abandoned him, so that he finds himself, in the hour and agony of death, with no other possession. All that he praised and flattered have fled, and that alone which he despised remains. It is true that, for the most part, death-bed repentances are too late. The gospel, so long refused, has ceased to influence the heart; and the Spirit of God, so long resisted, has ceased to strive with the sinner. We are not, however, on this account to undervalue the gospel as the best treasure of man. If he has so stupefied himself, and so offended God by his sin, as to be unfitted now for taking advantage of mercy when it is offered to him, as it certainly is, even at the very close of his life, we are not on that account to defraud the gospel of the credit which is due to its long-suffering and kindness. Its salvation is still proclaimed to the dying man; its entreaties to repent and believe are still urged; its

proffers of forgiveness and grace are made as sincerely as ever; and if now accepted of, even this the last would become the day of his salvation. We claim all this for the gospel message, and we dare not claim less, though in doing so it is certain that we fearfully increase the responsibilities of the gospel despiser; and truly it is impossible to conceive of any condition more deplorable than his who, in dying, perishes at the door of escape from divine wrath. Our position has, notwithstanding, powerful supports in those instances in which, at the latest periods of life, sinners have repented, believed, and been saved. In every case, indeed, in which any sinner did then and there believe in the gospel, it was found that mercy was not far from any one of them. But, alas! how few there be who, thus late in the day, make their escape! We have only one example recorded in the Bible, that of the thief on the cross; and that one, as has been said, that all may hope—but one, that none may presume.

From all which it must follow, that while the good man only dies safely, it is not the fault of the gospel if even the impenitent, when death is at hand, dies and is lost. The gospel also is at hand; the physician is at his bedside, the remedy is available, the well of salvation is opened, and all that is needed is the sincere reception of the remedy, and the drinking of the water, before the last breath is drawn. If that breath is drawn before the water is drawn from that well, the soul perishes; but, if the pitcher is let down in time, and but one drop is tasted, the soul lives, and lives forever. Such are the might and mercy of the gospel. What a precious boon is it to him "who is of few days, and full of trouble;" who is of many sins and full of guilt; who is at the door of judgment, and whose everlasting state is fixed irrevocably at death! Let

us prize the "good tidings of great joy;" and, while we anticipate for ourselves a happy and safe death, like that of Israel's high priest, let us never forget that we must also, like him, be devoted during life to the service of God, and ready, at the end, to lay ourselves down to die at his bidding, without either cloud or peril upon our souls. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

# MOUNT PISGAH,

AND

# THE DEATH OF THE LAWGIVER.

The chequered character of life is proverbial. All believe in the existence, and most men drink deeply out of the cup of its endless and trying vicissitudes. How rarely, indeed, do we find an instance of uninterrupted and tranquil prosperity! Nor is it considered, in the present state of man, to be at all favorable to his improvement, that he should escape the rough and angular pieces of the road, and slide smoothly into the vale of years. He who has to fight the battle of life, now subject to its reverses, and now fortunate in its conquests, is the more likely to be sober in success, and resigned under discipline. He is the man in whom the better principles of our nature, as these have been renewed by the Spirit of God, are certain to become both athletic and fruitful. "Born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward," and enduring that trouble in the assured confidence that "all things work together for good to them that love God," he evidently "grows in grace," and is every day made more and more "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Thus, that singularly mournful condition into which sin has brought mankind, and over which unsanctified

nature is ready to pour such pathetic lamentations, is converted, by the God of all grace, into a merciful system of means for the reproduction of piety and the restoration of peace. It is true, the benefit of this arrangement is felt only by those who are suitably exercised by their afflictions. Good men alone can say that it has been "good" for them that they have been afflicted; because, in such men alone, godly sorrow "yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness." To the believer, however, this truth is the sovereign catholicon for the ills, and the kindly comforter amid the chequered scenes of his pilgrimage. It may, indeed, be, after all, a "day of small things" to him, compared with the "more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which is to be the consummation of the whole matter; still he is far from "despising" it. To him such a truth gives a view of life on earth, which imparts somewhat of the tranquillity of the future rest to present conflict, somewhat of the charms of Eden to the desert where he dwells, and not a few of the choicest treasures of unveiled communion above to the partial and obscured manifestations of Christian fellowship below.

But while life is chequered, and has its appropriate consolations to the believer, it ought to be, much oftener than it is, a subject before our minds, that death also is chequered; death also has its vicissitudes, and its kindred terrors or supports in the midst of their endurance. As there is no monotony in life, neither is there in death. The varieties of death are as interesting, and perhaps more inexplicable, than those of life. Certainly all do not live alike; equally certain it is, that all do not die alike. The inequalities in both may be nearly proportioned; the common saying holding for the most part true, that as is the

life, so is the death. If the life has been thoughtless and godless, and racked and riven with sordid cares, so also is the death. The ruling passions retain their strength, and ofttimes have that strength increased, in death. Hence the varieties of an unbelieving career are almost sure to have their counterparts deeply characterizing its termination. If the life had its enjoyments by excluding the thoughts of death, the death has its alarms by including the memorials of life. So also, in the other and better case, when the Christian's hour for death arrives, he sees it reflecting the beauties of his life, and endorsing all the promises of glory and immortality, on which he has founded his hope. In his passage through life, he never accounted it else than "the valley of the shadow of death;" consequently, now that death is to terminate life, he believes that he is certain, in the encounter with the dark reality itself, to be "more than a conqueror, through him that loved him." Death, during life, he never feared nor forgot; and life, at death, he now remembers and reviews without alarm.

This is one view of the subject; but there is another. Often in death there is an apparent contradiction of things spiritual. There are diversities in the experiences of the dying, which, in the apprehension of faith, may be explainable, but of which mere reason can form no consistent ideas. We refer to the absolute indifference of some, the seeming composure of others, and the positively pleasant hopes of not a few unregenerated persons, when they lie down to die. It does not seem to make much difference in these cases, whether the individuals may have been of what we term amiable dispositions, like to the young ruler whom Jesus loved, or of flagrantly immoral habits;

when they come to a death-bed they are singularly cool, and utter some strange words about their comforts and hopes, which certainly do not deceive those who have known them, but which, nevertheless, are not a little startling. Even Asaph, in endeavoring to account for this, confessed it to be "too painful to him." He says, in the 73rd Psalm, concerning the wicked, "there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." The mystery, however, was solved to him when he went into the sanctuary of God; "then he understood their end;" then he saw that they were cast "down into destruction," that they were "as a dream when one awaketh;" and that "the Lord, when he awoke, despised their image." Thus ought we to establish our confidence in the safety of the righteous in death. Often they have "bands," and their strength is "weakened in the way;" they are "in trouble," and sometimes are "plagued;" but how different their "end" from that of the dreamy sinner! "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

Among the varieties of death-bed scenes, however, it is in the main true, that the generality of the righteous die happily. A few only may die in the full assurance of hope; but most die in peace, and all of them "die in the Lord." Hence, we have many testimonies from the saints, at that solemn period, to the faithfulness of God, and to the consolations of the gospel. It is, indeed, a splendid tribute to the truth of our holy faith, that no genuine disciple of its divine Author ever stultified his profession, by abandoning his creed in the hour of death. Many of the votaries

of superstition, and not a few of the dupes of infidelity, have broken down under its terrors, and held up their life-time professions to contempt. But from the beginning of the world has it never been known, that a Christian, in the possession of consciousness, let go his hold of the cross when on the eve of his soul's call to judgment. The authentic biographies of saints are, therefore, greatly to be prized, as every believer who dies with the hope of life and immortality contributes another evidence to the truth of his religion. When the individual has been eminent for piety and usefulness, it is of more importance that his latter end be peaceful, and that its character should be kept no secret. The saints encourage one another to live well, but they should also encourage one another to die well. Such encouragement becomes peculiarly pleasing when we know how bravely those have died who have occupied official positions in "the house of the Lord." These were our pastors, and we naturally desire to know how the principles which they enforced upon us, supported themselves "just in the last distressing hour." Dying as they for the most part do, not only are mourners comforted, but some gainsayers may be silenced, and not a few waverers confirmed.

For such reasons, we should be thankful students of scriptural biography. The lives of such men as Aaron and Moses are richly instructive; but equally so are their deaths. It has been to the profiting and encouragement of many, that the Holy Ghost has held back the curtain from their dying scenes, and privileged us with a view of their peaceful "latter end." We have already witnessed the impressive death of the high priest, and we are now to contemplate that of the lawgiver. As Aaron ascended to heaven from the summit of a mountain not far from Canaan, so

Moses rises to his "rest" from the top of another, still nearer to the land of promise. The whole scene is thus described by Joshua the son of Nun, at the close of the book of Deuteronomy :—"The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho, and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession ; and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people." Joshua adds, "and Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah," and "died there."* This affecting death we are now briefly to contemplate.

## PART I.

### THE DEATH OF THE LAWGIVER.

ABARIM—NEBO—PISGAH—MOSES' LAST WORDS—HIS DYING SCENE—HIS BURIAL—LAMENTATION OF ISRAEL.

The inspired narrative mentions no less than three names, as significant of the mountain on which Moses was to die. A simple explanation will make this intelligible. The range of mountains, on the summit of one of which this great man gave up the ghost, is called Abarim. Mount Nebo is the name of one of that range, and Mount Pisgah was the most elevated and commanding peak of Nebo. The range of Abarim extended southward from the land of Canaan towards

* Deut. xxxiv.

the river Arnon, and possibly to the range called Seir, of which Hor is one. Nebo is usually identified with Mount Attarous, about ten miles north of the Arnon, and nearly the same distance east from the north-eastern extremity of the Dead Sea. It is a barren mountain, which offers nothing remarkable. It is, however, the most lofty elevation in the neighborhood, and its summit is now distinguished by a large wild pistachio tree, overshadowing a heap of stones. In the text we are told that Nebo was over against Jericho, which makes it evident, that from its summit the promised land could easily be viewed.

Having, then, conducted the Israelites to this place, and the time of their crossing the Jordan to take possession of Canaan being now at hand, Moses must retire from the high and honored position which for forty years he had occupied; for God had told him that not even he should be permitted to enter Canaan; but though he shall not enter it, he shall have a view of the country. He is commanded to go up to the summit of Nebo and view the land; and after having seen it in the distance, he must die. Before ascending he must needs give Israel his blessing. He, therefore, issues his latest summons to the congregation, and lo, all Israel draw near to hear their king! They listen attentively to his dying words. He addresses each tribe by name, like good old Jacob, and having blessed all the people, he closes his long and brilliant ministry with these beautiful and remarkable words: "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone:

the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

"Noble language! noble heart!" exclaims a beautiful writer: "carried away in the contemplation of his children's happiness, he bursts forth into exclamations of joy in the moment of his deepest distress. But did that manly voice falter, and that stern lip quiver, as he advanced to bid them his last adieu? For a moment, perhaps, the rising emotions checked his utterance. They had been the companions of his toil, the objects of his deepest solicitude. A common suffering, a common fate, had bound them to him by a thousand ties. He looked back on the desert: it was past. He looked forward to Canaan: it was near. He turned to the people: they were weeping. He cast his eye up to Nebo, and he knew he must die. Although no complaint escaped his lips, no regret fell from his tongue, a deeper paleness was on his cheek, and a sterner strife in his heart, than he had ever felt before. Though outwardly calm, his stern nature shook for a moment like a cedar in a tempest, and then the struggle was over. His farewell was echoed in melancholy tones from lip to lip through the vast host, as he turned to ascend the mountain. As he advanced from rock to rock, the sobbing of the multitude that followed after tore his heart-strings, like the cry of a child for its parents, and it was long before he dare trust himself to turn and look below. But at length he paused on a high rock, and gazed a moment on the scene at his feet. There were the white tents of Jacob,

glittering in the sunlight, and there the dark mass of Israel's host, as they stood and watched the form of their departing leader. Those tents had become familiar to him as household scenes; and as he gazed on them, now far, far beneath him, and saw the cloud overshadowing the mysterious ark, a sigh of unutterable sadness escaped him. He thought of the bones of Joseph he had carried forty years, that were to rest with his descendants, while he was to be left alone amid the mountains. Again he turned to the ascent, and soon a rock shut him from view, and he passed on alone to the summit."*

The lawgiver at length reaches the top of Pisgah, and from that spot God showed to him the fertile land which he had sworn "unto Abraham, unto Isaac, unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed." What a splendid scene would open to his view! He saw before him "all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar." How long he was permitted to feast his eyes with this lovely landscape cannot be ascertained, but the curtain of death at last was dropped, and, to use again the glowing description of another, "the scene vanished from his sight; and, with the rock for his couch, and the blue sky for his covering, he lay down to die. O, who can tell what the mighty lawgiver felt, left in that dreadful hour alone! The mystery of mysteries was to be passed. No friend was beside his couch to soothe him, no voice to encourage him, in that last, darkest of all human struggles. No one was with him but God; and though with one hand he smote him, with the other he held his dying

* Headley.

head. How long was he dying? God alone can answer. What words did his quivering lips last utter? God alone knows. Was his last prayer for Israel? his last words of the Crucified? From that lonely rock did a shout go up, "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Of that last scene and its changes we know nothing; but when it was over Moses lay a corpse on the mountain top; and God buried him. There he slept alone. The mountain cloud which might hang over him was his only shroud and the thunder of the passing storm was his only dirge. There he slept while centuries rolled by, his grave unknown and unvisited, until at length he is seen standing on mount Tabor, with Christ, in the transfiguration. Over Jordan at last! In Canaan at last!"*

Such was the striking and appropriate termination of a most remarkable life. He who for forty years lived alone in the solitude of Horeb, and walked there with God while tending the flocks of an idolatrous priest, was thus brought to close his pilgrimage as he had commenced it. Alone on Horeb he had met the Angel of the Covenant, and received from him his commission to deliver Israel from bondage, and guide them to Canaan. That commission he had honorably fulfilled. Israel were on the borders of the promised land; and now again, alone, on Pisgah, that Angel returns to relieve his servant of office, and crown him with "the recompense of reward." With fear and trembling he had fled from the palace of Thermutis into the wilderness of Sinai; but "with gladness and rejoicing" does he ascend from Abarim, and "enter into the king's palace," from which he shall go no more out. What a transition was this! Even to

* Headley.

Moses, who expected then and there to die, it must have been a marvellous surprise. And surely if any regret was felt because he was not to cross that stream, and set his foot on that fertile land, it would instantly be quenched when he found his emancipated spirit amid the light, the love, and the glories of Paradise.

"So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there, in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended."

## PART II.

### LESSONS FROM PISGAH.

GOOD MEN SHOULD NOT FEAR DEATH—DUTY TO PREPARE FOR IT—THE WAY NOT TO FEAR DEATH IS TO LIVE IN THE HOPE OF HEAVEN.

Pisgah and Hor preach to us upon the same theme: their subject is death. Let us receive, then, these lessons from the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord:—

I. DEATH OUGHT NOT TO BE FEARED BY BELIEVERS! We are prepared to admit that death is the most

solemn of all the events that fill up human history. It ought to be regarded with the most profound seriousness. To think or speak of it lightly, tells of lamentable levity of mind. We cannot over-estimate the importance of that one step which is succeeded by the unalterable decision of our eternal state. Still, we confidently repeat, good men ought not to anticipate it with sinful fears.

To fear death implies, on the part of believers, that they regard it as an evil thing, which to them it is not; or it implies that they have some misgivings, either about their readiness for it, or the solidity of the Rock on which their trust is fixed. We have already endeavored to demonstrate that to good men it is not an *evil* in any sense of the word; it is stingless to the saint. It cannot take from him any one good thing he has, or ever had, or can wish for; it cannot add to any trial or affliction to which he has been exposed; it can make no cloud darker, no tear bitterer, no burden heavier, no difficulty more perplexing, and no anxious anticipations more saddening. If, then, it can do none of these things, a great cause of fear is removed. These things are inclusive of most of the ills that human nature dreads. But this is far from being all the truth. Death is a positive advantage, inasmuch as it perfects the felicity of the soul. It extinguishes instantly all the fires of affliction, levels all the barriers in the way to God, hides the happy spirit in the bosom of the Father, and puts it into the complete possession and enraptured enjoyment of all that life for which the Saviour "became obedient unto death." On these grounds it is unreasonable as well as unchristian to be afraid of death.

On the other hand, if the fear of death arises from a sense of unpreparedness to meet it, we must at once

resolve fear on such a ground into unbelief. There are two ways in which a good man may be said to be ready for death; the one is by actual justification, or by having the guilt of his sin completely and forever cancelled through personal union with the Saviour "as the Lord his righteousness;" the other way is by the brightening of his hopes and the maturing of his convictions, that he is one of the people of God, and that, consequently, for him to die is to "depart and be with Christ, which is far better." Now, it is evident that his fears are groundless, are utterly unbelieving fears, if they have anything to do with the first of these—that is, if they refer to the completeness of his justified condition. As far as that goes, he is always ready for death; yea, he might die in the very act of justification and be in Paradise the next moment, as was the penitent and pardoned thief on the cross. Eternal life is unalterably and inalienably secured to the man whose transgressions are forgiven. He may die then, or he may live for a century afterwards, he is equally secure. Death to him at any time would be gain, great gain; for a man is and can be justified only once, and that forever. "The gifts and callings of God are without repentance." "The path of the just, (or justified,) is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

If, again, the saint fears death from lack of proper evidence that he is in such a justified state, then it may be proper enough, nay, it is his duty, to be concerned about it, and that for several reasons. Why, for instance, is he in doubt upon a matter of such importance? Was he not commanded to make his "calling and election sure?" And are not all his uncertainties on this weighty question caused by his own remissness in self-examination? or, peradventure,

by his allowing his mind to be too much in the habit of conforming itself to this world? No man, whatever be his attainments otherwise in the experience of religion, can realize death without fear, who does not realize God without fear. And why should not every child of God think of him confidently, and long to be with him eternally? God is love! God is in Christ Jesus reconciling all such to himself. The act, then, which certifies the reconciliation, and brings the father and the child into actual and eternal embrace, ought rather to be hailed with hosannahs than regarded with apprehensiveness. Besides, it ought not to be forgotten that good men are to have grace given them, such as is not given till the hour of death—grace for that peculiar work. Hence, they may then discover that they are not only justified, but far advanced, in point of feeling and desire, for entrance into the glorified state.

It is scarcely necessary to advert at any length to what was alluded to as the remaining ground of fear; namely, the solidity of the foundation on which the hopes of the believer rest. Ah! never were fears more baseless, as never was foundation more secure and immovable. Our God is a rock, and his work is perfect. Our God is true, and his words are righteous altogether. Our God is faithful, and his promises shall be all literally accomplished. Our God is mercy, and all his compassions are kindled together when his people are passing through the waters, that he may "uphold them with the right hand of his righteousness." He may sometimes, in their lifetime, be provoked to leave them for a little, but he never does this in death. All the past is forgotten now, except "the kindness of their youth, the love of their espousals, when they went after him in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." Not to fear death, then, is a duty. "Fear

thou not," says God; "for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." "Be not afraid," says Christ, "it is I."

Not to fear death is the attainment of eminent piety. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," says David, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." "I am persuaded," says Paul, "that neither death, nor life—nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God." To a similar effect have been the dying attestations of many illustrious Christians. "Let him fear death," said an ancient father, Cyprian, "who must pass from this death to the second death." "I am not afraid to look death in the face," said Dodd. "I can say, Death, where is thy sting? Death cannot hurt me!" "O, when will this good hour come?" exclaimed Robert Bolton. "When shall I be dissolved? When shall I be with Christ?" "Here," said the pious Halyburton, "is a demonstration of the reality of religion, that I, a poor, weak, timorous man, as much afraid of death as any, am now enabled, by the power of grace, composedly with joy to look death in the face." And, "as for my death," said another dying Christian, "I bless God I feel and find so much inward joy and comfort to my soul, that if it were put to my choice whether I would live or die, I would a thousand times rather choose death than life, if it may stand with the holy will of God." If God be so very present a help in all times of trouble, that be far from him to deny us his presence in the hour of our departure. Be not afraid to die, then, O men of God! O daughters of Jerusalem! All is safe. The blood of the ever-

lasting covenant is upon you. Jesus is your advocate with the Father; and him the Father heareth always. He has brought forth the best robe and put it on you; yea, you are united to his person who is the resurrection and the life; you are bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. You are, therefore, locked in his embrace. At death you are on the very threshold of glory; and that very moment you cross it, you are with the Lord.

II. DEATH SHOULD BE ANTICIPATED AND PREPARED FOR.—Whatever be the aspect which death presents to us, it is our duty and interest to make ready for it. If it appears to us as an evil we should dread, then the sooner we are prepared to meet it the better, seeing there is no escape from it. And if it appears to us as a blessing we should long for, then it is incumbent on us to meditate on that manner of spirit with which we ought to hail it when it comes. As it is rather the death of good men, such as were Moses and Aaron, that raises these reflections, we would press this duty upon you that believe. It is no reason that you should be careless about death, because you should be fearless of death. You admit that it is a blessed thing to die, and be happy in heaven. Well then, be prepared to die with the law of gratitude in your heart, and the song of praise on your lips. We must trace the uninteresting, and, we had almost said, unedifying character of many a good man's death-bed, to his allowing death to take him in some measure by surprise. It cannot be expected that he is, at that solemn hour, to manifest "joy and peace in believing," if he is busied with, it may be a necessary but a somewhat out of season, and out of place preparation for his dissolution. How can he welcome death with spiritual tranquillity if, for instance, he has on hand a

great deal both of secular and religious matters to be settled? This is indeed an unseasonable mixture of things which, at such an hour, ought never to be commingled! Their worldly business, as far as is practicable, such as the disposal of property, and other family arrangements, ought to have no place in the exercises of dying saints.

Neither ought a good man to have his evidences of saintship to search for at such a time. When he comes to die he should have nothing else to do; and if he had nothing else to do, he would in every case die, if not triumphing, at least trusting; his soul would pass away in the midst of light. So died Aaron and Moses. They knew that death was near, they realized it, they made preparation for it, and when it came, it was just what they expected; they would have been disappointed if death had not come. They went about their own death as you see men going about their common business. Aaron ascends Hor, with his brother and son, to die there, and knowing that he was to die there; but no man in the camp could have gathered from his bearing that he was going upon such an errand. He allows his high priest's robes to be taken from him; he sees his successor in office invested with them; he is perfectly willing to leave his sacred duties at the altar, and to commit them now to Eleazar; he has no paltry envy of his son stepping into his place, and receiving the reverence of the nation and the gratitude of the church, which he had assisted in bringing forth from Egypt and organizing in the desert. He knows that in a few moments those goodly tents of Israel, upon which he looks down for the last time, will soon be filled with the voice of lamentation and weeping for him, and that never again is he to plead for them before the

mercy-seat. Notwithstanding, he is ready for death; he expects it; and when it was requisite that he should die, he died as it was requisite.

This readiness for death is even more touchingly illustrated in the last moments of Moses. Aaron died in the company of two much loved and greatly honored servants of God, and no doubt their presence would cheer and encourage him. But no one went up to Pisgah with Moses. He, too, knew that he was to die there, and when he left the camp that morning he knew that he was never to return. Yet he ascended, and alone, that he might expire! What an impressive spectacle! Follow him as he climbs the rugged sides of Nebo; see him on its summit. He turns his eyes towards Canaan, next towards heaven, then he lays himself down, as if to sleep and dies. These are two beautiful examples for all good men to copy. Think, then, my friends, think often of death; realize it daily. Paul did this; and hence he was always making ready for it, and when it did come, he peacefully bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. "I am now ready to be offered," he says, "and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

III. Death is met without fear when heaven is expected without doubt.—There are some who hold inconsiderate opinions upon the subject of "full assurance." They over-estimate its importance. They exalt it to a position which it does not occupy in the word of God, which is the rule of our faith. We refer to the dogma, that full assurance is, in

every true instance of conversion, not only attainable, but attained. The proper inference from this is, that such assurance is necessary to salvation, and that whoever lives and dies without it, passes into eternity as he entered upon time, "a child of wrath, even as others."

Now this dogma has no countenance from scripture, and the experience of the best of men opposes it. Many live and many die who never triumphed, but who have long trusted, and the promise of blessedness is to the man who "puts his trust in the Lord." At the same time, it is to be regretted that the duty of being assured of our interest in Christ—a duty which is so clearly enjoined upon all his disciples, obtains so small a place in the ordinary ministrations of the gospel, and consequently bulks so little in the eye and estimate of professing Christians. The consequences are, and must be, littleness of faith in the church, and a feeble and limited action by the church for the maintenance and extension of undefiled religion. This is an evil of a more general kind; but there are other injurious results which refer to the individual comfort of the people of God in the last trying hour. If all the "diligence" to which we are exhorted by an apostle were given to make our "calling and election sure," we should have far finer specimens of the victorious power of faith over the natural fears of death and the judgment that follows. We have said that good men should not fear death; that to them it is stingless. How does it come to pass, then, that a great number of really good men and women through fear of death, are all their lifetime "subject to bondage?"

It is not satisfactory to account for this, by referring it to their consciousness of having sinful hearts and

many defections both of character and conduct. This will be true of the brightest of saints to the last moment of life; for "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It is because we did sin, that Jesus died; and it is because we still sin, that Jesus "ever lives to make intercession for us." As, then, his atonement and intercession are intended and adapted to counteract the penal consequences of sin, we who believe in the infinite worth of the one, and in the all-prevailing power of the other, cannot, either reasonably or scripturally, plead the remaining corruption of sin, as a vindication of this distrust. In justification, our guilt is forever cancelled; so there cannot be curse in sin to us. And in sanctification, our love of sin is destroyed: we are conscious that we hate it, though the "law of the members" every now and then gets the better of the "law in our minds." Thus, then, delivered from the curse and love of sin, its power over us, to a certainty, is gradually diminishing; that is, we are surely and progressively made ready for death, come whensoever God may send it. Now, if these views of truth were kept steadily before our minds, we would soon be ashamed of our terror at dying. Many are afraid of what they call the sin of presumption. And so they ought. But why are they not equally conscientious upon the sin of unbelief? A genuine Christian cannot be guilty of the first sin, presumption, when he rejoices in the hope of heaven as the gift of Christ to him. It is his duty so to rejoice. But he may be guilty of the second, unbelief, when he hesitates to realize his title to eternal life through the merits of his divine Mediator.

We cannot go far aside, if aside at all, from the truth, when we aver that it is the duty, and may be-

come the privilege of all the people of God, to convince themselves that they are of the truth, and so "assure their hearts before him." This duty is never more easily performed, and this privilege is never more deliciously enjoyed, than by habituating the mind to the idea that we are sure of heaven when we die. Kept continually before us, this certification of eternal bliss would not only have a fine reactive influence in restraining the growth of worldly-mindedness, but it would impel us forward in all the higher walks of Christian activity. Yes, believers in the love and sacrifice of the Lamb of God, we affirm it without any hesitancy, you ought not to doubt of your safety in him, either before, at, or after death. Neither death nor life make any difference to you as to your secure possession of his favor. If you live you have it; if you die you have it; and you must surely admit that, whether living or dying, "in his favor there is *life*," and in his loving-kindness, something even better than life. For any one, then, who has faith in the atonement of Jesus, to be afraid of death, is somewhat tantamount to his being afraid of life. To the Christian, death is life; it is going to the Lord; it is "being with the Lord." There is no journey which we ought to be more happy to take, than that which is to lead us heavenward and Christward; and there is no presence we ought so much to long and pray for, as His, where there "is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

But how, it may be still asked, are we to contrive to reach such a clear and blissful height as that from which we could enjoy a foresight of our future entrance after death into the "land that is afar off?" The an-

swer to this question shall be simple, and with it we conclude:

Live on the summit of your spiritual Pisgahs! Let the word, the covenant, and the perfections of God, be to you as the mountains of Abarim. Let the all-sufficient righteousness of Christ be to you as mount Nebo. And let your hope in that righteousness be to you as Pisgah. With your minds enlightened in the truths of the Bible; with your hands grasping the bonds of the everlasting covenant; with your eyes gazing on the brilliant glories of Jehovah's attributes as they are exhibited in redemption, ascend by faith, that you may set your affections on things above. To be continually sustained in this spiritually elevated condition and exercises, let this be your confidence, that it is the Rock of salvation on which you stand. Above all things, do not mistake your own sinful shakings and fears for any insecurity about that immovable and indestructible foundation.

When thus lifted up and planted on God's own high places, on Zion's own lovely heights, open the eyes of your hope, and you will see before you the promised inheritance: that is Canaan! that is heaven! Now, do not close your eyes, neither avert your head; do not look behind you, and think not of descending to the valley of the world you have left. You must tabernacle for a season on Pisgah; it is really good for you to be there. Keep your gaze fixed on the magnificent scenery spread out before your spiritual vision. See, yonder in the distance is the New Jerusalem, whose light is "like unto a stone most precious; even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;" whose wall is "great and high," having "twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels;" whose city itself is "pure gold, like unto clear glass," having "no need of the sun,

neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Yonder is the "pure river of the water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Yonder is the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, and yielding her fruit every month. Yonder is the throne of the Eternal, and that is the Lamb of God sitting upon it; round about that throne there is a rainbow, in sight like unto an emerald, also four and twenty seats, whereon are four and twenty elders clothed in white raiment and having on their heads crowns of gold. Before that throne are burning seven lamps, which are the seven spirits of God, and ranged around, with harps in their hands, are innumerable angels and ransomed spirits, who rest not day nor night, singing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Believers! that city is your destination, that God is your God, that Lamb is your Saviour, these angels are your servants, and these just spirits are your fellow-citizens, who have gone before you; some of them may be your own dearest and most beloved relations and friends. These, it may be, are your parents, your husbands, and wives; and these sweet-looking happy seraphs, who are claiming right to sing above all the rest, are your beautiful little ones, who there

> "Have found the happy shore,
> They never saw nor sought before."

O, how can you ever think of turning your eyes away from such sights as these, to view the vanities of life?

How can you deliberately purpose to go down and dwell again with the men of the world? Goodly may be the tents of Jacob and the tabernacles of Israel; as "the valleys they may be spread forth, as gardens by the river side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters;" but even they cannot for a moment stand in comparison with this view from Pisgah. The Lord himself "loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," and so in your estimate of the two, ought you to prefer the heavenly to the earthly Jerusalem. If you are wise, cherish such a preference continually. Abide in the full assurance of hope that you will soon go over to that land of bliss; and resolve, under divine grace, never to disturb the peaceful testimony within you, that Paradise is to be your everlasting home, and that death is to be the messenger that must carry you thither.

And when at last that messenger arrives; when you feel that the tide of life has well nigh reached its lowest ebb; when the farewell scene with weeping friends is over, and when every sublunary thing has faded from your mind, even then your faith, which is certain soon to pass into vision, shall become not only omnipotent over the King of Terrors, but so eloquently vocal with the praises of Him who has "abolished death" for you, as to leave the privileged spectators for a moment in doubt whether you are in the body or out of the body. Thus you will pass from your death-beds to your thrones, in the very exercises, and with the very feelings, which are to be maintained and cherished throughout all eternity. Thus even heaven, with all its inconceivable splendors, will take you less by surprise than if you went thither from a lower platform in the steep ascents of spiritual life. Its full

communion you had almost reached; with its exalted society you had made yourselves sweetly familiar; to its elevating and gorgeous music you had long tuned your hearts; and now, one last breath drawn, and your happy spirits are absent from the body and present with the Lord.

# MOUNT GILBOA,

AND

# THE VICISSITUDES OF LIFE.

HAVING crossed the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua, the successor of Moses, the children of Israel, after many severe contests with the Canaanites, at length got possession of the promised land. For a long period they continued under the government of the judges, and were prosperous and happy. In course of time, however, they became emulous of monarchy, and demanded a king. "Behold," they said to Samuel, "thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." The venerable seer remonstrated with them on the sin and ingratitude of such conduct, but in vain.—"Nay," said they, "but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." They got their wish, and in due time Saul was crowned. Troublous times soon thereafter befell the kingdom. Saul proved himself to be unequal to the exigencies of his high position. The evil spirit which sometimes came upon him, and his jealousy of the man whom Providence pointed out as his suc-

cessor, involved the nation in turmoil, and often placed them in peril.

The Philistines were the most warlike and formidable of Israel's adversaries. Jehovah used them as instruments of punishment for his people's rejection of himself. It should be noticed, that the coronation of Saul was not under divine sanction. God only permitted it. The idea of erecting Israel into a kingdom was of their own suggestion. They ought to have been contented with their first system of government, not only because it had been tried and found suitable for four hundred years, but because it was of divine appointment. There is something peculiarly impressive in the words of Jehovah respecting their conduct at this time: "Hearken," he said to Samuel, "unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." The sequel of their history proves how dangerous it is to dictate to God in a spirit of dissatisfaction with his arrangements. We may assure ourselves that we are never so well nor so safe, as when we permit Him who sees the end from the beginning to determine the bounds of our habitation. Over our prayers for his guidance and goodness, we ought to exercise a jealous watchfulness, that they do not degenerate into clamors for change, merely for the sake of change. He may be provoked to give us our heart's desire, which, in such circumstances, is certain to turn out a curse, not a blessing. The Hebrews scorned the theocracy, even the rule of him who is King of kings, and they soon discovered, upon the mountains of Gilboa, and under the reign of many of their kings, that, as they were chastised with the whips of one, and with the scorpions of another, they were only "eating the fruit of their

own way, and filled with their own devices." Let us meditate for a little upon the melancholy disasters that befell them in the battle of Gilboa, in which they sustained a disgraceful defeat, and the death of their first monarch.*

# PART I.

## PORTRAIT OF DAVID.

GILBOA—DAVID AND GOLIATH—JONATHAN—BRAVERY AND PIETY—DEATH OF SAUL AND JONATHAN—DAVID'S LAMENTATION.

There is but little to be told about the field of battle. The mountains of Gilboa lie sixty miles to the north of Jerusalem, bounding the great plain of Ezdraelon on the southeast, and are interposed between that plain and the valley of the Jordan. "Here," we are informed, "there are a number of ridges with a general direction from northwest to southeast, separated by valleys running in the same direction. The largest of these valleys is the southermost. It is a broad deep plain, about two miles and a half wide, and leading directly into the Jordan valley. This is supposed to be the valley of Jezreel, as Ezdraelon is sometimes designated. The mountains which bound it on the north appear to be those of Little Hermon, and the higher mountains, which bound it on the south, undoubtedly form mount Gilboa." This group of hills rises to the height of 800 feet above the level of the road,

* 1 Samuel xxxi.; 2 Samuel i.

and is perhaps 1000 feet above the level of the Jordan. The ridge rises up in peaks, and bears a little withered grass, and a few scanty shrubs, scattered about in different places." The peculiarly desolate character of Jebal Gilbo, as the natives still call it, was ascribed by most of the old travellers to the poetical imprecation of David, where, in his lamentation over Saul and Jonathan, he says, "Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be any rain upon you, nor fields of offerings!" This, however, is too literal an interpretation of the words of the poet, since it is admitted, that at the present day, ample dews and heavy rains fall upon these hills.

Meagre, however, though the topography of Gilboa may be, we quickly become interested in its mountains when we study their scriptural history. The pathetic strains of the sweet singer of Israel have immortalized them. They are now associated, in every pious mind, with one of the most graphic pieces of Bible narrative. There the mighty fell, and there the weapons of war perished. There Saul, the king of Israel's choice, and Jonathan, the brave and the good, were slain; and there David, the anointed of the Lord, ascended the vacant throne.

It was altogether a singular manifestation of the overruling Providence of God. As in the first instance the choice of the people fell upon one while he was seeking for his father's asses, in the second the choice of Jehovah fell upon one who was tending his father's sheep; so true is the scripture: "Promotion cometh neither from the east nor the west, nor from the south, but God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another; he raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dung-hill, that

he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people."

In studying the scene before us, we cannot disregard the truly exquisite picture which the inspired narrative draws of the shepherd-boy's introduction to our notice in the character of a warrior.* Let a brief sketch suffice.

King Saul sits in his tent by the valley of Elah, and the banners of the armies of Israel are floating all around on the sides of Gilboa. The king has summoned a council of war, and beside him now are gathered both the men of wisdom and the men of might: these are pale with terror, and those are absorbed in perplexing consultation. Each man looks in the face of his neighbor to find the courage which he lacks in himself, but conscience has made cowards of them all; no one seems disposed to deliver this council of war from its dilemma. What occasions it? The challenge of a Philistine giant to settle the present contest between his army and that of Israel, by a personal combat between him and one of the Hebrew warriors. "Why are ye come out to set your battle in array?" he exclaims. "Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants; but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us."

Already forty days have passed away since the Philistine defied the armies of Israel, saying, "Give me a man, that we may fight together." He had presented himself every morning and every evening during that period, but as yet his gauntlet lay untouched upon the neutral ground. O shame to the warriors

* 1 Sam. xvii.

of Israel, who had seen the glory and power of Jehovah, and who had so often fought and conquered under the broad shield of his favor! Matters cannot remain long in this state. The heathen hosts, by every day's delay, become more emboldened, and are impatient for the battle. The Israelites are every day correspondingly disheartened, and less disposed to risk a general engagement. But the dreaded crisis comes. The host "goes forth to the fight, and shouts for the battle." "Israel and the Philistines put the battle in array, army against army."

The king has made a last appeal. It is received as the others were, in silence and fear, and hope is about to be abandoned. Suddenly the tent door is thrown open, and all breathless from his speed, a messenger from the field enters, and narrates that the challenge has been accepted. The bosoms of the council again heave; they are relieved of fear, but their eyes are full of astonishment. Surely, thought they, this bold man must be one of the hardy and powerful veterans of the camp, and they await with impatience his arrival, for the king has sent for him. He comes! What a disappointment! They expected, perhaps, one of the old warriors of the time of the judges; but lo! the brave accepter of the giant's challenge is a stripling. He has never been in battle, he knows not how to use the sword, nor project the arrow. How mortifying! It is the court minstrel! it is the son of Jesse! known only for playing skilfully on the harp! A smile of derision is upon every face. The king is offended, and exclaims that it cannot be. His harper firmly, though meekly, maintains his purpose, and narrates what God already enabled him to do when he delivered the lamb of his flock from the paws of the lion and the bear. The royal heart is assured. "Go, and the

Lord be with thee," he said, and David is taken to the royal armory. He is encumbered with the weapons of their warfare. He quickly puts them off; he has "not proved them." So, with nothing more than a staff in his one hand, and a sling and a few pebbles from the neighboring brook in the other, he goes forth —confidence in the Lord of Israel strong and steady within him—to fight the uncircumcised Philistine.

But there is a stir also in the camp of the enemy. It is rumored that their champion's gauntlet has been lifted; and soon the rumor is confirmed. Goliath, in the pride of his strength, awaits the approach of his bold antagonist. When he espies David, his soul is filled with contempt. "Am I a dog," he cried out, "that thou comest to me with staves." And the Philistine cursed David by his gods, and said, "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field!" How noble the reply of the king's minstrel boy! "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand: and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the field; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel." He then lifts his sling; the stone is projected from it; God gives that stone direction and force; in a twinkling it sunk into the forehead of the giant; his huge carcase measures the earth; and having cut off his head, David carried it with him to Saul, and receives the royal command to return no more to his father's house.

There was one in the household of Saul on whom

the circumstances related made a deep impression. This was Jonathan, his son, and, as one would say, the heir-apparent to the throne. No sooner had he listened to the account which David gave of himself to his father, than he conceives for him the strongest love. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." The many proofs which he gave of this love are recorded in the sacred narrative. Often did he intervene to avert the deadly jealousy of his father from David; and uniformly, when the latter was persecuted and oppressed, did he essay to alleviate his grief by sympathy, and revive his drooping spirit by pointing him to the brilliant future. This was the more to be commended, when we consider that filial respect and affection abode still and strong in his heart. His was an exceedingly delicate position; for if he ventured too far in obedience to his love for David, he might seem to disregard the authority of, and the respect due to a royal parent, and thus risk his displeasure. On the other hand, if his anxiety to manifest that filial regard was not very carefully controlled, and very adroitly timed, the life of his adopted brother might be seriously imperilled.

If any additional consideration can increase our admiration of this truly lovely youth, it is this; he evidently had no jealousy of David, who he knew was to supplant him in the throne. So far from this being the case, it seems to have been his great object to preserve him for that throne, and to reserve that throne for him. There must have been, yea, there was, in such extraordinary self-denial, the fear of God. Such disinterestedness is rare. In analogous instances, the worst passions of depraved nature have been infuriated in order to circumvent the accession of rivals

or opponents. But Jonathan was pious. He saw that the crown was designed by the God of Israel for the son of Jesse; and perhaps, too, he had seen enough of the cares that are inseparable from such exalted stations, and enough of the vanity of earthly greatness, to quench in him all desire after the succession. He was not only content then to step aside and allow another to take his place, but he was so well pleased with the evident designs of Providence, as to lend a most cheerful aid to their entire accomplishment.

O that such a spirit had ever dwelt in the bosoms of the mighty men of the earth! What wars and rumors of wars might thus have been prevented! How many of the countless and appalling miseries that accompany and flow from unbridled and cruel lusts, might never have been known! In the case before us, if the father had possessed but a tithe of the godly fear and manly acquiescence of the son, the character of David perhaps would not have been subjected to the severe ordeal, in passing through which he was qualifying for his future distinction, but Israel would have had more honor and happiness under his reign, and he himself would have enjoyed the advantages of his high rank. But how unlike the father to the son! How fickle, envious, ferocious, and impious was Saul—how steady, generous, self-denied, submissive, and devout was Jonathan! Earthly greatness and divine grace are seldom found together in the same individual; sometimes they have been discerned in the same family. Saul was a great man, as the world counts greatness, but he was very far from being a good man. His son, however, (and it is not often that king's sons have such a reputation,) was one of the very best of men. In every point of view, his character is extremely beautiful and even noble. It has

been inadvertently surmised, that it requires a hard-hearted man to be a hero. There never was a more affectionate man than Jonathan, and after David's encomium on his bearing in the battle-field, who shall deny that he was brave as a lion? "From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back."

It is also equally ignorantly affirmed that a pious man cannot make a brave soldier. You know how many scriptural illustrations can be quoted to prove the very opposite, and Jonathan and David are not the least eminent among the heroes of the Bible, who were also most evidently God fearing and praying men. Even profane history furnishes not a few honorable instances of the union of piety and fortitude in the same individual. We are told that the Duke of Marlborough, after one of his famous engagements, declared, that he believed he had prayed more that day, than all the chaplains of the army put together. The illustrious Cromwell, we know, was much given to prayer; and whether he was most expert at handling the "sword of the Spirit" or the sword of war, it is not easy to decide. By the chivalrous use of the one, and the sincere employment of the other, he destroyed the enemies of his country's liberties, and shielded with a nation's bravery and piety his country's altars. The name of Colonel Gardiner is well known to all who delight to contemplate heroism in the soldier with godliness in the man. And thus it will always be. It is "the fear of man that bringeth a snare;" the fearers of God are bold as lions.

We cannot venture on a description of the subsequent events in the history of David, from the period of his victory over Goliath to the battle in which Saul, his royal persecutor, and Jonathan, his beloved friend,

were slain. Suffice it to say, that his life was one of perpetual unhappiness, from the evil spirit of Saul. Even the exquisite music of his harp came to lose its soothing influence over the royal mind. As David played, the king meditated murder, and oftener than once projected the deadly javelin against his minstrel. Again and again he had to escape from the palace; and for years he fled from place to place, hiding, now in the field, now in the cave, now on the mountain side; sometimes, in the mysterious Providence of God, having the life of his kingly foe in his power, but never venturing to injure one hair of the head of him whom Samuel had crowned king of Israel. The chivalry of the conqueror of Goliath was forgotten in the eager haste of Saul to shed the blood of that hated one whose praises filled the land of Canaan. His envious spirit could not tolerate the acclamations that extolled the son of Jesse at the expense of the son of Kish. He might have been pleased with this, "Saul has slain his thousands;" but became like a madman when there was appended to it, "David has slain his tens of thousands." An end, however, came to it all. The Philistines gave battle to Israel, and Saul was routed. Saul and his sons were among the slain; and from amid the disasters of the mountains of Gilboa, David ascended the throne of Judah.

The conduct of David, on hearing of these disasters, is exceedingly rich in all those treasures for which a forgiving disposition and a grateful heart are commended. From his pathetic lamentation, no one could have gathered that Saul had been his enemy, and the occasion to him of years of unutterable distress. No; there is not one line on which even the shade of such an allusion can be detected. The wail of this touching scriptural coronach could not have

been more genuinely sorrowful, though Saul's love to David had equalled that of Jonathan. No difference is here made in the tribute given to the father and the son; both are characterized as the "beauty of Israel," as the "mighty fallen," as having both "been lovely and pleasant in their lives." Nothing is here recorded of the dead but what is good. The past is forgotten, and the rank and excellences of the deceased are alone remembered. Whatever he had been to David, Saul was king; he was "the Lord's anointed;" and under the same holy regard for the honor of Jehovah which led him to put to death the Amalekite who pretended to have slain the king, he now celebrated those qualities which would not only embalm his memory in Israel, but diffuse its savor among the nations. His thoughts were not all selfish in this melting cardephonia. He remembered the honor of Jehovah. God's people had been routed by the Philistines, and his people's king had fallen; hence that fine burst of regard for the glorious name of Jehovah: "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph."

David here sets a fine example. If the followers of the Lamb had always been under similar impressions of what was due to the credit of the common cause, the cause of God, there would have been amongst them fewer denunciations of their several failings or backslidings, and much more of that charity which thinketh no evil, and covers a multitude of sins. Christians should remember that they are of one family, and that they ought not to make public all the defects which, if it may be so expressed, their household familiarity occasionally develops. An honorable

mind will conceal from the world what in the family circle is freely discussed and condemned as improper. So ought the members of the household of faith. Such a system, did it more extensively prevail, would tend greatly to commend Christianity to ungodly men. It is admitted that some provocations are not easily resisted, and some injuries not easily borne; but if we would only remember that the sacred cause of religion is at stake in our hands, that the honor of our beloved Redeemer is in peril, we would much more easily conquer our own spirits, and submit in silence to what otherwise we might very properly denounce in public. It is, or ought to be, a most humbling thing to the genuine disciple of Christ to hear the daughters of the Philistines rejoicing, and the daughters of the uncircumcised triumphing over the fall of virtue or the declension of piety. It is possible that we may have been unjustly and even cruelly treated by some who call upon and trust in the same Saviour. It is our duty to forgive them; and if they should be in danger of bringing disgrace on our common profession, it is our duty to do what in us lies to hide their misconduct, unless the still higher interests of truth demand a more open and free investigation. In this, it is best to err (if it be an error) on the side of tender jealousy for the credit of religion, and of enlightened charity for the failings of human nature.

It were injustice to this beautiful and touching anthem, and to that sweet psalmist who made it, to overlook the truly melting effusion of fraternal grief with which it concludes. No other language has made such a contribution towards the expression of those exquisitely amiable affections that reign in the inner man of the renewed heart. "O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places! I am distressed for

thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" If we except our Saviour's lamentation over Jerusalem, we consider this specimen of pathos in grief to be unparalled. It is sublime without being unnatural, intense without being extravagant, laudatory without being fulsome, copious without superfluity, and sentimental without effeminacy. Jonathan well merited such an encomium, for the annals of friendship present no such embodiment as did his, of all the properties that give to manly affection the image of divine love, and enrich its outgoings with the nutritious aliments of sensible, seasonable, and substantial piety. To this admirable youth may be assigned, in Old Testament biography, a niche corresponding to that which John, "the beloved disciple," occupies in the New. Let us learn from his history not only to bow to, but to labor to carry out, the designs of Providence; not only to live, but to die, if need be, for the cause of God, and that his decrees may be fulfilled.

The beautiful story of the battle of Gilboa is replete with instruction of a varied and interesting character. To one view of the subject, however, we confine our observations, and that for obvious reasons. The vicissitudes of this life are strikingly apparent in the misfortunes of Saul, and the elevation of David; but such changes belong to no age or people; they appertain to the human lot; and as in these days we are called upon to witness such, not only in the revolutions of kingdoms, but on a large and distressing scale, in the ruinous circumstances into which many private families throughout the land have been hurried, as well as in the destitution that generally prevails among the

laboring classes of society, it may be useful to re-carry the subject to our minds, and extract wisdom, resignation, and comfort from our meditations upon it. God speaks to men both in his Providence and in his Bible. There are indisputably rich varieties of wisdom in his Bible, far surpassing, in importance to sinners, any of the lessons which are taught in his Providence; still, these lessons are not to be despised. The vicissitudes of life are among the most impressive and instructive of them. The wonder is that they are so generally neglected. Perhaps it is because they are so common and so constant. We are evermore in the midst of them; and as the hackneyed grave-digger comes to be as unconcerned about death as the monumental stones around him, so do men lose the keen sense of this world's distressing alternations of good and evil, from their familiar and uninterrupted exposure to them. We have already endeavored to arrest the attention of the reader to the subject of death; so would we now submit for his profitable reflection, the subject of life, in its numerous and interesting mutations.

## PART II.

### THE LESSONS FROM GILBOA.

LIFE'S VICISSITUDES—THESE ARE TESTS OF CHARACTER—USEFUL INSTRUMENTS OF GOD—THEY WEAN FROM THIS WORLD, AND PREPARE FOR A BETTER.

I. HUMAN LIFE IS EXPOSED TO MANY VICISSITUDES.—The proverbial character of this statement almost

forbids our illustrating it. But, though proverbial, it is seldom that the thought which it contains is sufficiently ruminated. How does this happen, since all experience its truthfulness? Can it be that some classes are an exception? If so, we may surely look for that exception among the first grades of life, where are to be found what are called, "the children of fortune," whose lives describe one apparently tranquil course to the grave. No change passes over them but what is the necessary result of prolonged being. They were born, they have lived, and they die; they were born to independence, they have lived in plenty, and they descend to the grave in honor. Compared with the sons of toil and trouble, there does not seem much irregularity or rudeness here. But this is a surface view of the matter. It is not as it seems. Here, also, are many and distracting changes. Go to the highest examples at once. Select at random from history, and you have specimens in abundance. Saul dies on Gilboa; David, his harper, reigns in his stead!

How much of profane history answers in kind to this sacred vicissitude! The descendant of a long line of kings is a fugitive from his throne, and is thereafter beheaded in his capital. A citizen of obscure birth, and a puritan soldier, seizes the sceptre, makes the commonwealth the most powerful dynasty in the world, and dies the far-famed founder and protector of his country's freedom. An ambitious Corsican wades to an imperial throne through torrents of human blood; Europe quakes under the tread of his foot; his word dethrones hereditary sovereigns, whom he replaces with the menials in his court, or the brave in his camp. Quickly his career reaches the culminating point, and he falls, dragging out a wretched exile on a barren ocean-rock, not forgetting, but forgotten by

all, excepting the few companions who share with him his misfortunes. A wanderer among the Alps, though once a prince, another royal scion ekes out his existence by instructing the peasantry of a foreign land; bides his time till the revolutionary tempest that overthrew the Bourbon had passed away, outlives the interregnum, watches the insane policy of the restored monarchy, witnesses its second fall, becomes the nation's choice, and reigns; reigns not long, till he, in his turn, is the victim of a third revolution, and now hides his head among a people he would have injured, but who trample not upon the unfortunate. The possessor of a splendid mind, greatly enriched by the treasures of wisdom and science, and made still more illustrious by his advocacy of every good and noble cause, lives to occupy the highest station in his country below the throne, but outlives his magnificent reputation and, all uninfluential now, squanders his powerful intellect in the twaddle of political imbecility. On the other hand, the son of an humble agriculturist, with nothing but a sound judgment and moral rectitude to regulate it, conceives a great idea, perseveringly works it out, and, while abiding in his plebeian rank, compels legislative respect, and becomes an authority in the councils of a great nation, which is often denied even to royalty itself. These are some of the vicissitudes of life which characterize and afflict the higher orders of society, proving that even they are no exception to the rule.

But "change" is written upon all the lintels of the numerous door-posts of human life; change of the most contradictory and surprising nature, and of which we have at present some impressive and even mournful instances. The man born in poverty dies in possession of the fields upon which, in early life, he

earned his bread by the sweat of his brow. The hereditary owner of vast estates lives to see them, like dissolving views, fading before his eyes, and he expatriates himself, perhaps to draw his latest sigh in the shambles of continental debauchery. The diligent and successful merchant, who contemplated an evening of life placid and clear, sees the fortune of his industry fall to pieces before some commercial tornado; and instead of enjoying the fruit of his labors, must end his days in contributing, perhaps, to enrich those by whom he has been ruined. The father of a hopeful family, upon whom he has expended time, and labor, and money, who he expected, in his vanity, might be the founders of an illustrious house, and transmit to distant generations the names and the virtues of ancestral antiquity, lives to carry every one of them to the grave, and dies, leaving his all to one not born in his house, and who only acts the part of a chief mourner out of deference to public decency. Such are some of the illustrations of life's vicissitudes upon what may be called the medium scale.

But who requires to be told that there is many a touching, overwhelming story of this kind in the experience of all, however lowly their station, or unambitious their projects! We are sometimes meeting with the disappointment, sometimes with the realization of our hopes. We are seldom without the garb of mourning in our houses; and the tear is often falling over the graves of beauty, affection, and friendship. There is nothing abiding here; if what we fondly call our own does not fly away from us, we go away from it. In undergoing the troubles, and fighting the battles of life, we are the subjects now of comfort, then of dejection; to-day of sunshine, to-morrow of gloom. There is first the glee of hilarity, then the

sigh or shriek of ruin. Here is life dancing before us in the nimbleness and agility of success; there is death riding on his pale horse. This is Lazarus in rags and sores; that is Dives in purple and plenty. There lies love bleeding; here malignity triumphing. Here is genuine merit neglected; there patronized ignorance installed. Above, is duplicity chuckling over its dupes; below, is honesty paying what it owes. On the right is the good man struggling with adversity; on the left the wicked flourishing like a green bay tree. In that corner, genius and industry are amassing fame and opulence; in this, vice and dice are casting both away.

What a world is this we live in! How full of changes! How marred with misfortunes this hour; how enlightened with prosperity the next! Music to-day; yelling to-morrow! Gold for a year or two; copper ever after! Now a cradle; then a coffin! Now smiling on our mother's bosom; then asleep in our mother earth! A curse at one time; at another a blessing! Faithful here; a traitor yonder! Once a sycophant; again a tyrant! Having something, and being somebody, for awhile; dying at length, having nothing, and being nobody! O man! at thy best estate thou art altogether vanity! O life! thou art but a vapor, that appeareth for a little! O world! thy people and thy fashions alike pass away! And yet before this man, whose "inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn," these countless thousands are eager to bend the knee; this life, short, uncertain, and unsatisfying as it is, is eagerly sought after, while the long, long life to come is clean forgotten; and this world, which, after all, is to be enveloped in destructive fire, is intensely pursued, while the eternal glories of a celestial inheritance are either discredited or despised. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity."

II. The vicissitudes of life are severe tests of character.—Subjected to this test, many a stately structure of human pretensions crumbles into dust. They vanish as the thistle-down before the stormy wind. The friendships of life, the maxims of worldly morality, and the principles of true religion, when passing through this ordeal, have their truth or falsity discerned.

Of the friendships of the world, it may be affirmed that few of them stand the test, whether we view it in connection with the prosperities or adversities of life. It reads either way, and the lessons are ever the same. We have a friend, as he is called, and perhaps we are convinced he is one. He is of the same standing as to circumstances. Mutually dependent on each other, we are in the habit of rendering mutual assistance. By and by he gets the start of us; we continue poor, or of moderate possessions; he waxes rich, then great, then proud. Where is his friendship? Let many a humiliating tale reply. He does not know us now; he is ashamed to be seen in our presence, or to be thought of our acquaintance. He passes by on the other side, and eventually our society is despised. Or, we have a friend who is presently dependent on our humble aid to get on in life. He begins life on the credit of our good name; he suffers reverses, and our means help him out of them; he lives upon us; he is a debtor to a large amount to our generosity, sympathy, prudence, and counsels. Suddenly the sun rises upon him; he is exceedingly fortunate; he gets into society above our rank; his head gets giddy; his heart gets cold; he remembers us no more. Unexpectedly our day of adversity comes; we need a friend, assistance, comfort, and advice. We go to him in our straits. He makes every effort to keep out of our

way; but we are importunate, and succeed in getting an interview. Alas! he cannot help us. He has so many claims, so many pressing demands of so many different kinds, it is just enough to ruin one to attend to one half, to one tithe of them; we are gracefully, perhaps insolently, bowed to the door. This is no satire; it is of every-day occurrence. But there is an oasis even in this desert. With some truly noble natures it is widely different. Their prosperity never damages their ancient friendships. On the contrary, they remember Joseph, even when in the dungeons of Pharaoh, and hasten to deliver him. These are the friends born for adversity. The friends indeed are the friends in time of need, but theirs are angelic visits, "few and far between."

Apply this test next to the maxims of worldly morality, and you speedily expose them to just contempt. This world is very wise in its own conceit. In itself, or out of its own resources, it can supply principles for all conduct, motives for all duties, and strength for every trial. This world is a boasting philosopher. It vaunteth itself mightily on its own magnanimity, and puffeth itself up with high estimates of its own moral rectitude. Religion it despises; it has no need of it. It may be useful for women, perhaps, and children, but it is too pretty a conceit, or too much of a toy, to be made the protegé of manly dignity. Let us see. There is one of its votaries, one of the alumni from its university, one of the prophets from its schools! He is soliloquizing. Let us listen to him. That thing, he says, which priests call religion, is a hoax. A man has no need of it, either to keep him moderate in the use of fortune, or unmoved in a time of trial. There is that in man which will uplift him above the storms of life; his is a noble nature; and there is that in

reason which will comfort man in sorrow; and there is that in philosophy which will dispose him to acquiesce without peevishness in the decisions of fate.

Such is the theory of the moralist. Look now at his practical application of it. He is lifted into opulence, clothed with honor, and endowed with power. Where is his moderation now? He lives in luxury and debauchery. Where is his nobility? He puts on the fool's cap of vanity, and struts about, thinking himself more than man, or other men less than him. Where are his compassions? He becomes a tyrant, and shuts up his bowels of mercy: it is beneath the dignity of a great man to weep—that is the attribute of soft and vulgar natures. But let us see him thrown back upon obscurity and seeming ruin. If it be actual disaster, where is his fortitude? Can that discontented, spiritless man be he who so recently applauded the maxims of this world's ethics? If fraudulent, where are his honesty and integrity? Can that unprincipled withholder of his creditor's goods, that deceitful exhibitor of false balance sheets, can this be the man who decried religion, and commended the dignity of human nature? Ah! how loathsome the picture! Let us turn from it to another more inviting and instructive.

The principles of genuine religion are also severely tested in the vicissitudes of life, but they stand that test. Suppose the case of a truly good man rising into affluence and influence. He abides uncorrupted alike in faith and in manners. He is not on that account made sinfully proud. He remembers the days of his poverty, and is humble; the God who blessed him, and is grateful; the poor, who are his brethren, and for whom he is steward, and he provides for them; the sick and the friendless, and satisfies

them with his goodness, and his better counsels, and his best prayers; and, in the midst of other claims, he never forgets a world lying in wickedness, but deviseth liberal things for its conversion to God. This man, however, is very far from being free from the temptations of riches and worldly importance. His virtues are tried; his heavenly-mindedness is oft in danger. He is apt to consider his earthly his best portion; and sometimes he may even forget, and think more highly of himself than he ought to do; yea, he may not entirely keep himself from the idolatry which rich men give to Mammon. But when at any time his foot slips on these high places, he is sure to recover himself. His better principles regain the ascendancy; he is often heard saying, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" "Get behind me, Satan." "If I have done unjustly, I will do so no more."

But to do a good man justice, we must scrutinize his behavior in the opposite condition. Suppose him, then, to lose his all, how does he sustain his spirit? A very good, and a very great man, in ancient times, was subjected to this trial. He was the chief magistrate in the land of Uz. He had many sons and daughters, and very great substance. Satan refused to believe him a disinterested fearer of God. "Put forth thine hand now," he said to the Lord, "and touch all that Job hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." God put forth his hand, and the patriarch was speedily without son or daughter, flock or herd. He was totally ruined in a night's time; hurled from the high places of honor and abundance into the lowest depths of distress. How did he stand the test of such an appalling vicissitude? "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon

the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." Satan still refused to give him credit for piety, and said to God, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life: but put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." God put forth his hand, and immediately, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, Job is covered with loathsome disease; "and he sat down among the ashes. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

Few good men have been so severely tried, yet amid their diversified probations, none of them are found wanting; they come forth from the furnaces worshipping God. Their faith never fails, their consolations never flee away, their hopes are never extinguished, and their resignation is often truly sublime. "How can you be so calm and cheerful?" said one to an eminent Christian whose property was enveloped in fire; "is not your all at stake?" "Nay," was the reply, "it is not so; my all is laid up where fire cannot reach, and where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt." The high priest "held his peace" when his sons were slain. The Shunamite said, when her only son died, "It is well." The Hebrew children, rather than worship an idol, walked in the fire. Daniel, rather than be prayerless, lay down in the den of lions. The apostles shed their blood, and laid down their

lives, rather than put their Lord to shame. And all the truly faithful can say, "Though he should slay me, yet will I trust in him." The secret lies here, they have all drunk into his spirit who, in the hour of unutterable agony, and with the curse due to sin upon him, lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

III. GOD EMPLOYS THE VICISSITUDES OF LIFE TO WORK OUT HIS OWN ENDS.—Had this world continued the abode of innocence, there could have been no moral necessity for any process, by which its rational inhabitants might be induced to desire a change of habitation. But this is now a sinful and miserble world; and it is no more than what might be expected of Him who laid down his life for us, than that he should alienate our affections from it, and inspire us with ardent longings after the better country. To bring men to heaven, Christ died; and there is nothing in the providences of the Father running counter to the designs of the Son in redemption. What a mighty and imposing structure of truth may be reared on these two simple propositions of our Lord: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered;" even a sparrow "shall not fall on the ground without your Father!" Herein lie the weighty elements of the argument for a special as well as a general Providence. These sayings of Christ are sufficient reasons for believing that God has a minute oversight and control of everything that here below comes to pass. He reigns throughout all his kingdoms of nature, providence, and grace. As to his administration of the affairs of this world, we may rest assured that he is everywhere, and in everything; in the rise and fall of the mightiest empires; in the creation of the atom, and in the commis-

sion of the archangel; in the calm and in the tempest; in the palace, and in the cottage; in the career of temporal prosperity, and in the whirlwind of temporal disaster; in the songs of the happy, and in the tears of the sad; in the blessings of the righteous, and in the judgments of the wicked. He is, therefore, in all the vicissitudes of human life, and he is in them for the very same reason that he is in everything else, namely, to promote his own ends. And what are these? *The good of his creatures*, and *the glory of his name.*

He is in them for the good of his creatures. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto him, and live. He finds man a fool as well as a knave, stupid as well as wicked. He therefore corrects him for his folly, and endeavors to make him wise. One of his methods for accomplishing this is to show him the vanity of this world. He permits him to go the full round of its pleasures, and to take a drink out of all its cups, and then gives him to experience their bitterness, and to test their worthlessness. His purpose is to induce man to taste and see that only God is good. Alas! how few are apt learners in this school of Providence! They resist the efforts thus made to bring them to repentance and holiness. It is all one to them whether they have plenty or poverty; whether bereaved, or full of children; whether whirling in the giddiness of greatness, or shivering in the damps of death; they repent not, they believe not. In the enjoyment of his kindness they wax fat and kick, and forget God; and in the endurance of his chastisements, they curse God, and die. How true the saying of the wise man, "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat

with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him!"

But it is not uniformly so. Scripture and our own observation furnish us with many illustrations of the benefit to be derived from the vicissitudes of life. Joseph, Moses, David, Manasseh, and many others, were all improved by their various experiences. These fitted them for the duties, the trials, and the variations of life. "It is good for me," says one of them, "that I was afflicted. Ere I was afflicted I went astray. I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."

Were it not for these trying ordeals, good men would be apt to forget their pilgrim character, and perhaps take themselves to the unreserved service of Mammon. God knows best each man's temperament and infirmity. He only reads each man's history to its closing chapter. He, therefore, is the best judge as to whether they should or should not have worldly prosperity. He knows when to turn the tide of fortune, and leave them, as it were, stranded on some inhospitable shore. They may be better able to bear the full flow of success at some future time. In these days of commercial panic and disaster, when the savings of industry and the treasures of generations are tumbling above our heads, good men, who are losing their earthly all, may rest assured, that the moment for encountering such losses was, to their best interests, a moment of danger. Their whole future destiny, it may be, depended on the issues of that moment. Their incorruptible inheritance in heaven was perhaps secured, when their corruptible treasure on earth took wings and fled away. It is good for them that God does not leave it to their choice, whether they will retain or lose their monies and

their lands. He solves that problem for them, and will by and by convince them that the disappearance of the shadow was necessary to the security of the substance. Stripped naked of this earth, that flows with tears and cares, they are then infeft into the land that flows with milk and honey. They are now indoctrinated into the truth about the real vanity of life, and are more assiduously than ever set on making clear and good their title to the skies. Hence it is, also, that God gets his use out of them as experienced teachers of others in the ways of wisdom. He gets the use of their example for those that are around and to come after them, and his own cause on the earth is thereby maintained and promoted; which reminds us that,

God, in all the vicissitudes of life, seeks his own glory. How eminently does this appear in the chequered history of the patriarchs, and especially of Saul and David! That which looked to the eye of nature dark and unpromising, was surely and directly working out the glory of Jehovah. Saul rises and falls, that David might fall and rise. So it seemed to be. But was there nothing underneath all the turnings and windings of these two lives, of far higher import than their own terrestrial significance? There certainly was. God was thereby preparing his chosen one—one of the most illustrious types of the Messiah—for laying broad, deep, and secure, the foundations of that kingdom, whose career of reverses or victories was sublimely figurative of the future history of that church for which his incarnate Son was to shed his blood. He was thereby qualifying for his future high position, one, from whose loins the Saviour was to proceed, and in whose experiences, as recorded in the

Psalms, the future believer was to have one of his chiefest enjoyments.

And though each good man's history may not be so clearly revealed to us in all its bearings upon the glory of Jehovah, we can have no doubt that, whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does, he does all to the glory of God. If he lives, he lives to the Lord; and if he dies, he dies to the Lord: living or dying, he is the Lord's. It may not be easy, perhaps not possible, for us at present to trace the connection that exists between all the vicissitudes in the history of man in this world, and the advancement of the spiritual kingdom of Christ; but that there is such a connection we must believe. Jesus is exalted to the right hand of his Father. He is indeed head over all things to the church. Everything is put into his hand, every person under his authority, and every devil beneath his feet; and he will come at the last day to be seen of all his saints, and to be glorified of them that believe. Then will be seen the most astonishing coincidences and alliances. The saint will see that his cup of tears was really filled with the water of life; that his downfalls were his true uprisings; that his losses were his gains; and that his earthly biography, when translated into the language of the heavenly Canaan, describes his course below to have been, without exception, the direct and safe road to the chief end of man.

IV. THE VICISSITUDES OF LIFE OUGHT TO WEAN OUR AFFECTIONS FROM THIS WORLD, AND FIX THEM ON THINGS ABOVE.—Such was the effect these vicissitudes had upon the man of Uz. "I loathe it," he said; "I would not live alway." David also thus improved them; "And he said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. I

would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest." Likewise also did Paul; hence his "desire to depart and to be with Christ." When changes and trials lead us forth from Egypt, and fill us with ardent longings after the heavenly Canaan, then they may be said to have been sanctified to us; and for such a sanctification of them, we ought all to be most solicitous with God. We cannot doubt that he sends affliction to make this world bitter to our taste, and to generate within us holier aspirations. When, then, we pass through sudden, and it may be, trying changes in life, we ought to receive their proper instruction, and withdraw our hearts from the phantoms of time, to give them to the realities of eternity. Every vicissitude is vocal with this message: "Arise, and depart; for this is not your rest;" and all good men who hear "the rod, and who hath appointed it," will reply, "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." The love of the world is the besetting sin of mankind, and it is exceedingly prejudicial to religion. It is utterly incompatible with the love of God, and stands like an Alpine range frowning upon the progress of those better principles and feelings which distinguish the spirituality of saints. Consequently our heavenly Father must strike a fatal blow at its roots in the hearts of his children, who never give more unequivocal proof of their adoption, than when they sustain adversity without murmur, and sing of mercy in the midst of judgments. We do not know a better test of saintship than that which is given by the man who can say, and that with perfect truthfulness, and it is indeed sublime to be able so to say it, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee. O Lord, thou art all my salvation, and all my desire."

When we take a calm survey of this life, with its stern variety of change, we may wonder that any should be attached to it. But when we meditate on the splendid hopes of Christians, in respect of the life that is to come, we confess it difficult to account for the touching, tasting, and handling of this world that obtains among them. They not only have received the promise, but they live in the hope of a better and more enduring inheritance. What a sad contradiction to their Christian profession is the longing, lingering look they cast behind on the gold and silver, on the friendships and partnerships of the world they are quitting! Let us not be taken by surprise, if He who has prepared treasures and mansions for them in heaven should dash their earthly cup from their lips, and grind their idols to powder. They may be so foolish as to risk the loss of a celestial inheritance to grasp a handful of dust; but He is not faithless, neither quick to anger, else he might leave them to go after other gods, and be ruined for ever. He remembers his covenant with them in the days of their espousals, and secures their opulence in eternity, by meting out to them their poverty in time. It will be well for you, ye sons of men who are now passing under the rod of God, if all your evil things are given you here. O listen to the warnings of this mutable state, and believe these trials to be treasures! They serve you as the angel served Lot and his family. While you linger, they lay hold upon your hand, and upon the hand of your wives, and upon the hand of your daughters, the Lord being merciful unto you; and they "bring you forth, and set you without the city," and say unto you, "Escape for your life; look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain; escape to the mountains, lest you be consumed."

How eloquently, we may say, how appallingly, have the vicissitudes of life been speaking to us during the year that is departing! The veteran of fourscore does not recollect such an another, so full of all the ills to which flesh is heir. At many a fireside there is deep distress; many a Rachel sits weeping, and refuses to be comforted; and not a few, plunged from plenty into difficulty, bewail the losses and the crosses of life. The opening and the closing of this year will be remembered by many, not for its domestic and social enjoyments, but for the starless and troubled sky underneath which they have mourned and wept. But, Christians, your canopy is not the starry firmamen, else you, too, might lament the absence of the sun and the moon. Yours is the bright blue arch of Paradise, where the Sun of Righteousness ever shines, where the bright and morning star ever twinkles, and where no clouds obscure, nor tempests roar. Act, then, your part accordingly. Let the world, peevish and wretched in the midst of its vicissitudes, behold in you a noble and commanding specimen of the power of that faith, which makes you independent of time, and thoroughly confident in eternity for your chief and indestructible possessions. Be not afraid of encompassing, neither despond before expected evils. The storm will soon expend itself. It may level in its fury the mightiest structures of genius and industry; it may tear up the mountains by the root, and fling them into the sea, and all the waters thereof may roar. Fear not, *you* are safe; and your best possessions are safe; and your much-loved Christian friends are safe—perfectly safe. Your all is insured in the chancery above, and the King of Righteousness has sworn an oath, that when you reach your majority, you shall fully enjoy your inheritance. Then the

heavens and the earth are to pass away with a great noise, but you will see the new Jerusalem appearing as they fade from the view. Maintain your confidence; no panic can reach the treasury of God. Every farthing will be paid you; no thief can break through and steal there; all you get you will keep, and enjoy forever. There you will pine under no disease; encounter no death; be re-united to the "brightest and best of the sons of creation;" and in the bosom of God you will live and be perfectly happy through all eternity.

Believe this, ye men of God, and then go through your present trials and duties, singing with heavenly melody. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places."

Believe this, also, ye that at present do groan in the earthly house of your tabernacle, and yet despise the consolations and supports with which the gospel would supply you. Your earthly house, as well as that of the saint, must be dissolved; but O, how different the result! You have not the blessed hope of the "building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." In this you groan, but without any earnest desire to be clothed upon with that house which is from heaven; consequently, not being clothed, you shall be found naked.

Believe this, then, that if you seek first the kingdom of God, every other needed blessing will be added

to you; and when you are called hence at death, you will be received into everlasting habitations.

Believe not, and all is lost. Time and treasures are lost below, and eternal life you can never enjoy above. Do not forget that "their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god;" multiplied amid all the vicissitudes of life, amid the terrors of a godless death-bed, before the tribunal of a righteous Judge, and throughout the ages of endless woe.

# MOUNT CARMEL,

AND

# THE FALL OF IDOLATRY.

## PART I.

### THE SITUATIOM AND APPEARANCE OF THE MOUNTAIN.

Mount Carmel is in Palestine, and forms the southern promontory of the bay of Acre, which lies on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. It is one of a range of hills which extends northwest from the plain of Esdraelon. The extent of this range is about six miles, and it is generally designated as Carmel. It is about fifteen hundred feet high, and forms the only great promontory upon the coast of Palestine.

The scenery on this mountain seems to have been very picturesque. In his description of the spouse, Solomon says, "Thine head upon thee is like Carmel;" alluding to the fine symmetry and beauty of its summit. Isaiah sings of the "excellency of Carmel," as descriptive of the solitary places and the desert in the times of the gospel; and there are allusions to its rich pasturage by the prophets Jeremiah and Amos. Modern travellers tell us that it fully merits these praises, and that the meaning of the word Carmel,

which is "the country of vineyards and gardens," is sustained by its beauty and fertility. "On its summit," we are told, "are pines and oaks, and farther down, olives and laurel trees, everywhere plentifully watered. It gives rise to a multitude of crystal brooks, the largest of which is the so-called fountain of Elijah, and they all hurry along, between banks thickly overgrown with bushes, to the Kishon. Every species of tillage succeeds here admirably under this mild and cheerful sky. The prospect from the summit of the mountain over the gulf of Acre and its fertile shores, and over the blue heights of Lebanon, and the white cape, is enchanting." "In front the view extends to the distant horrizon, over the dark blue waters of the Mediterranean; behind stretches the great plain of Esdraelon, and the mountains of the Jordan and Judea; below, on the right hand, lies the little city of Acre, diminished to a mere speck; while in the far distance beyond, the eye rests on the summits of Lebanon, and turning to track the coast on the left hand, takes in the ruins of Cæsarea, the city of Herod and the Roman sovereigns of Palestine."

In this mountain there are said to be nearly a thousand caves or grottoes, and in one part about four hundred of these are adjacent to each other, having windows and places for sleeping below in the rock. These caves have very narrow entrances; only one individual can enter at a time, and they are so crooked that instantly you enter you disappear, unless closely followed. This helps us to understand that passage in Amos, where Jehovah says of those who endeavor to escape his judgments, "though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence." In ancient times, these caves were the abodes of prophets. Elijah and Elisha

often resorted to them. At present, a cave called by the name of Elijah is shown by the monk who attends upon a Moslem temple, now built near the spot. On the summit was once a convent, the property of the order called the Carmelite monks. This structure, however, was destroyed by Addallah Pacha; but it has of late years, we regret to say, been rebuilt on a somewhat imposing scale by the aid of contributions from Europe. The site of the building is supposed to be on the spot on which Elijah offered sacrifice. The finest of the caves in Carmel is that called "the School of Eliaz." It is a well-hewn chamber, cut entirely out of the rock. It is twenty paces long, twelve broad, and fifteen to eighteen high. Pococke declares it to be one of the finest he ever saw.

The history of this mountain is associated with one of the most impressive and sublime scenes recorded in the Old Testament scriptures. It was upon one of its sides that the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal met to try the grand question as to whether Jehovah or Baal was God. The exact place where the events narrated in the eighteenth chapter of the first Book of Kings occurred, cannot be satisfactorily determined, though there seems to be no doubt on the minds of some who visit Carmel, that the slaughter of the priests of Baal took place beside the river Kishon, at the base of the mountain, and that the sacrifice must have been made on that side of its summit which overlooks the river Kishon and the plain of Jezreel. Mr. Carne says, "There can be no illusion with respect to the scene of the memorable descent of the fire from heaven. When all Israel was gathered together unto Carmel, it was clearly on this side the mountain, where it descends gradually into the noble plain beneath. The spot was finely chosen by the prophet for the

spectacle of his sacrifice, since the multitude of the people coming from the region of Samaria might stand with perfect convenience in the splendid and open area of Esdraelon, which is here terminated at the foot of Carmel. The declivity of the mountain, its brink dark with woods, and its sides covered with the richest pasture, looks over a vast extent of country on every side. From the hills of Samaria, Cana, and Gilboa the miracle might have been beheld. And to the eager gaze of the Israelites on the plain, the prophets of the groves, their useless altars, and the avenging messenger of God, were as distinct as if the scene had been acted at their feet."

With these brief notices of the topography of Carmel, we would now proceed to sketch the interesting meeting that was held upon it in the days of Ahab king of Israel, between Elijah the Tishbite and the prophets of Baal.*

## PART II.

### THE SCENE ON CARMEL.

IDOLATRY OF BAAL—MINISTRY OF ELIJAH—HIS PROPOSAL TO AHAB—CONCOURSE ON CARMEL—FAILURE OF BAAL—TRIUMPH OF THE TISHBITE.

Israel had had many kings since Saul fell on Gilboa: some of them most unprincipled and despicable men, but none more so than Ahab. The crowning iniquity of this prince seems to have been his impor-

* 1 Kings xviii.

tation of the idol called Baal, from the Sidonians, into Israel. Baal or Bel signifies governor or ruler, and was the name given in the east to the chief male idol of the heathen. The female idol, corresponding in importance to Baal, was called Ashtoreth, who was represented by one or other of the heavenly bodies. Jeremiah speaks of the "queen of heaven;" and the probability is that the moon was worshipped by the Sidonians and Philistines under this title. Baal was thought to be the most ancient god of the Canaanites, and had many prophets and temples, where bloody sacrifices were offered, and shameful rites observed in his name. According to Jeremiah, these sacrifices were sometimes human. Altars were erected to him also on the tops of hill and houses, and in the groves, where, on festival occasions, the most shocking abominations were perpetrated. Ahab had married Jezebel, daughter of an idolatrous king; and under her sway the worship of this idol had become sinfully popular in Israel. Four hundred and fifty priests served at his altar, and to Ashtoreth nearly an equal number were appointed. The judgments of Jehovah were, in consequence, sent down upon the land. He who had declared from Sinai, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," must needs arise and rebuke the abounding iniquity. But "the iniquity" is under the patronage and protection of the king and queen; and where shall one be found brave enough to go up and assail it on the throne? He who has said, "My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images," has his instruments always ready. Hence it is written, "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my

word." Here was moral courage of a sublime order. What was at stake? Not only his own life, for daring thus to reprimand royalty, but, what was of more consequence, the honor of his God, if, peradventure, his prophecy concerning the rain should fail. Bold, however, though it was, Elijah was safe in both respects.

The curse of Elijah had now been on Ahab and his people for nearly three years. No rain nor dew had fallen, and famine, of necessity, ensued. The prophet, meanwhile, had been hid for a season by the brook Cherith, and latterly in Zarephath. He was now remanded to Ahab, who is represented as wandering up and down the country searching for food, not to save his subjects, but his horses and mules alive. At length these two men meet; that stern and fearless seer, and that foolish and wicked tyrant meet. "Art thou he," asks the insolent Ahab, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Elijah denies the charge, and retorts upon the royal idolater. The contest is understood to be, not between Elijah and Ahab, but between Jehovah and Baal; Jehovah being represented by the prophet, and Baal by the king. The king puts himself forth as the champion of the idol, Elijah stands up for the supremacy of Jehovah. How is the dispute to be settled? How is all Israel to be convinced that the Lord, he, and he only, is God, and that Baal is one of the deaf and dumb idols of the heathen? This is certainly a crisis, a very awful and portentous crisis; and similar to this, we may notice, is in all lands the question of the gospel enterprise. That question is, Whether shall Jehovah or Baal be worshipped as the true Deity? When we send the gospel to idolators, and challenge their priests to come forth and make the grand experiment as to who is right and who wrong

in the creeds severally confessed, we feel the occasion to be solemn and important. We watch the progress of the grand combat between truth and error with breathless attention, and wait the result in our closets, and on our knees. Let us, in the scene before us, approach such a trial of piety against impiety; neither let us be afraid of the issue, for "who hath hardened himself against God, and prospered?"

What did Elijah propose? It was that all Israel should be convened at a place specified, Mount Carmel, to be the judges between them, and that the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of the groves, who ate at Jezebel's table, should be brought there also, where he, the only representative of the Most High, would be prepared to face them without fear, and confound them without fail. Ahab, thinking he should now obtain the mastery over his austere reprover, and thereby exalt Baal before the people, agrees to the proposal. His mandate circulates through Samaria. The appointed morning dawns, and crowds of people are seen hurrying in all directions across the plain of Esdraelon towards the mountain. Public curiosity is excited, and, as it happens still, when the controversy is upon religion, multitudes, who care nothing about the merits of the question, are eager to witness the trial of strength between the parties. I think I see the descendants of the patriarchs, the children of the men who aforetime saw Sinai on fire, now stationed at the foot of Carmel. I look in vain for any group friendly to the man of God. I listen to their colloquy if I may catch one sentence breathing a prayer for his success that day. Alas! "Fallen art thou, O Israel!" No man speaks for Elijah; they know nothing in yon motley crowd, even of the sordid spirit that leads our modern gamb-

lers to stake large sums on "the hazard of the die." The defeat of the Hebrew and the triumph of Ahab are taken for granted, and they anticipate, with carnal joy, the consequent debaucheries with which the victory must be celebrated. Ichabod is, indeed, written upon Israel: "The glory has departed." It has departed, but it is soon to return.

The sun is now far up in the east, casting his golden rays over the mountains of Judea, and promising soon to fall above the waters of the great sea from which Carmel seems to "lift his awful form." The murmurings of impatience are heard, and fears perhaps are entertained that Elijah's courage may fail. But hark! the borders of that vast assembly are suddenly agitated, and every eye eagerly seeks out the cause. It is Elijah, says one. No, said another, it is Ahab! Then was the air rent with their most loyal plaudits, and every one, as they gaze upon the chivalrous monarch, feels more and more assured that *he* is not the man to venture where he has not well examined his ground. Victory is again anticipated, and they raise up another shout, as if victory were already his. But where is Elijah? Another stir at the outskirts attracts their notice. Behold that Tishbite now! they cry. No, not yet; these are the prophets of Baal! If loyalty called forth a shout that made the caves of Carmel ring again, superstition now lifted up its impious voice till the waters of the Kishon recoiled in their channel, and the silence of Esdraelon became ten thousand echoes. Carmel itself heard the idolatrous thunder, and frowned from its beautiful summit upon the godless crowd beneath. These priests now take their place, and await the coming of Elijah. Alas, for the good old seer of Judah! What chance has he against so many? Eight hundred and fifty priests, the king,

and all the people of the kingdom, to one man—one unbefriended, hated man! Fearful odds! The day is ours! shouted the multitude. Let us cast Elijah, when he comes, from the top of Carmel to the depths of the sea!

But where is Elijah? Will he come? They fear not; he has turned coward, and Baal is now, beyond controversy, God. Hush thy voice, O vain idolater! hearest thou not the footsteps of the prophet? Look across the valley of Jezreel; seest thou a man with a mantle cast around his shoulders? he comes this way; he comes with solemn step and slow; now he nears the mount; the people separate, making a way for him through the midst; he falters not, but is erect and firm as truth itself; his eye is eloquent of thought, and upon his pale face solemnity reposes. No wonder: it is Israel whom he sees before him, not assembled, as of old, on Jehovah's side, but marshalled to hurl him from his throne, and fill it with an idol. No wonder: on the issue of this day's experiment depends the re-enthronement of God in Jeshurun, and he, a defenceless Hebrew prophet, is responsible for that issue. Without uttering a word, Elijah ascends the mountain. The king, the priests, and the people follow. He reaches a favorable spot on its side where the trial should be visible from all directions, and then he waves his hand for silence. Every sound is hushed, and a deathlike stillness reigns. What a moment of thrilling suspense! He speaks; let us hear him. His words are as bold as ever, and his bearing as confident. "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal be God, then follow him." He pauses for a minute, but gets no reply. "The people answered him not a word." Either they are impatient to hear more, or they are self-condemned

for that contemptible indecision of character of which Elijah has accused them. He speaks again. How affecting are his next words! "I, even I, only remain a prophet of Jehovah, but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men." Notwithstanding this great disproportion, however, he expresses his willingness to proceed. He does so, and proposes that Baal's priests should first of all cut a bullock to pieces, and lay it on the wood, but no fire under it; that he should do the same with his bullock; that they should then retire from their respective altars, and wait the issue; "the God," he said, "that answereth by fire, let him be God." Nothing could be more reasonable; and without apparently consulting either the king or his priests, the people answered and said, "It is well spoken."

Having then succeeded thus far in obtaining their acquiescence, Elijah challenges the idolaters to begin. They begin; they cut their bullock to pieces; the pieces are laid on the wood, but no fire is permitted to be carried near them. There is anxious expectation for a period; they look to the top of Carmel; they gaze towards the sea; they survey Jezreel's Vale, but no fire appears. What cry was that? "O Baal, hear us!" Ah! this is a cry of threefold iniquity; it is a cry of fear, of unbelief, of idolatry. What a cry to be heard from an assembly of Hebrews! Who would ever have predicted such a scene within the territories of the promised land? The day, however, is advancing; and as time is valuable when the cause of truth is weighed in the trembling balances, Elijah goes up to the priests. What a spectacle meets his view! In their rage at their own god for not sending fire, they had leaped upon the altar and broken it down. The prophet's courage by this time is greatly confirmed, and in words of bitter irony he thus ad-

dresses them: "Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." Maddened by this satirical description of their favorite idol, they begin to cut themselves with knives and lances, till the blood gushes out.

The day drags on, and the sun is already gilding the Mediterranean with his setting beams; but no answer is given, and no fire descends. They have had a fair trial, from the morning even until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. Surely none can object to Elijah's being now permitted to make the trial of his God. Haggard and bleeding, the infatuated priests retire from the spot; calm, dignified, and assured, the servant of Jehovah approaches it. He commands the people to come nigh. They draw near. In their presence he repairs the altar, takes twelve stones, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel, and having finished the necessary preparation, he puts the wood in order, cuts his bullock into pieces, and lays it on the wood. Being all ready now to bring the grand experiment to a close, the thought strikes him, they may attribute it to trick; so he commands them to fill four barrels of water, and to pour them on the sacrifice and on the wood. They obey him. This is done a second and a third time, till the water ran round about the altar, and the trench was filled with water. Thus deluged, the consumption of the flesh by fire would cause a deeper impression.

The hour of the evening offering has now come. At that hour the Holy One of Israel must inflame his own sacrifice by his own fire, as of old in the wilderness. The Tishbite walks up to the altar, folds his mantle more closely around him, and raises his eyes, and hands, and heart to heaven. The ghastly features

of the priests are lit up with the premature hope of a failure as complete as their own. They come a little nearer, and nearer to the prophet, but he heeds them not; his soul is in communion with God. The multitude, now to some extent cast down from the proud vaunting with which they had heralded the dawn, watch with breathless interest the procedure. At last silence is broken. Every ear is turned to the altar to hear that prophet's prayer. And for what does he pray? Listen. "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again." With what emotions would that vast assembly await the answer to the simple but truly sublime petition! No sooner had the last words escaped the prophet's lips, than down came the fire of God, and the whole sacrifice was instantly burned up, as if it had been chaff in the furnace.

The experiment has succeeded. Jehovah's solitary prophet has triumphed. The people are now carried round to the side of truth; and, falling down on their faces, they cry out, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God." The order being given by Elijah, the whole of Baal's priests are seized, dragged down the mountain to the brook Kishon, and every one of them put to death. How terribly and surely will Jehovah vindicate his own honor and majesty! The besetting sin of Israel being thus instantly laid aside, the judgment which it had imprecated on the land is as quickly removed. Elijah bids Ahab get up and eat and drink; "for," he says, "there is a sound of abundance of rain."

Such were the august and important scenes that day witnessed on Carmel; and the following lessons, among many others, are thereby taught us.

## PART III.

### THE INSTRUCTIONS FROM CARMEL.

SIN AND CURSE OF IDOLATRY—HOW ITS PROGRESS MAY BE ARRESTED—DIVINE BLESSING RESTS ON BELIEVING PRAYERS AND EFFORTS—DUTY OF BEING DECIDED IN RELIGION.

I. IDOLATRY IS THE SIN AND CURSE OF MANKIND.—An enlightened Christian considers idolatry to be largely diffused in countries called religious, and to be as obnoxious and impious a thing in them as in heathen lands. He believes all sin to be idolatry, and all sinners, by whatsoever name they may be otherwise called, to be idolaters. What is sin but the alienation of the heart from God, and the gift of that heart to some darling lust? Before God it does not matter whether the idol worshipped be nominally a deity or really an impure desire. Whatever a man lusts after, that is his idol: whatever a man does, in order to gratify such lusts, that is his idolatry. The worship of the true God consists in fearing him, and keeping his commandments; such, in fact, makes up the whole duty of man. If, then, God is not feared, and his commandments are not kept, he is not worshipped. According to this view, then, sin is idolatry, and idolatry is the sin and the curse of mankind. It is our original estate. Thus are we born, and thus do we

live, till grace translates us from Satan to God; and if we refuse or resist grace, thus it is that we die. The descriptions given in the Bible of our depraved nature corroborate this account. The sinner is there declared to live "without God in the world." "God is not in all his thoughts." He is a "lover of pleasure, more than a lover of God." "He hath said in his heart, There is no God." The person who thus excludes, God, who gives to the creature the heart that is demanded by the Creator, and who permits the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience to be his ruler, must be an idolater. As, then, you find idolatry wherever you find man, so everywhere you find the curse of God. "Judgments," says scripture, "are prepared for scorners;" but we find his judgments as fearfully extensive in Christian as in heathen lands. The scorners then must be everywhere, at home as well as abroad, in the churches of Christianity, as well as in the temples of heathenism. This view of the case withdraws our attention from the defalcations of God's ancient people, to the consideration of our own. Are not we similarly disposed? Our business, treasures, children, amusements, may at any time become our Baal. In the haunts of impiety, or in the recesses of earthly affection, or at the marts of traffic, we may be said to build our altars on his high places, there to sacrifice to him our activities and thoughts, yea, our very souls. How true must this be, when even the apostle John saw it necessary to say to Christians, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols!"

It is lamentable to think of idolatry of this kind abounding among Christian professors. We are astonished at the ancient Hebrews; we are disposed to regard them as ingrates, and to pronounce them fools;

but we should be careful lest in so doing we condemn and stigmatize ourselves. We, too, are a peculiar people. Every mean of grace is at our right hand. God can do no more for our vineyard than he has done; and yet, on taking a cursory glance at the state of society in many parts of Britain, it would not be easy to say whether Jehovah or Baal was God. Do we well to be angry because Jehovah is frowning? Ought we not rather to take the warnings of his displeasure which abound in these days of darkness, and forsake our idols? No rain for more than three years fell in Samaria because of Israel's homage to Baal. How marked and alarming was such a token of Jehovah's jealousy! but it was long unheeded, and, consequently, famine and its horrors bestrode the land.

Are there no signs of God's being angry with our country at this period of its history? Temporal disasters have never been so extensive in their range, nor so ruinous in their effects. The food that sustains us has been blighted; thousands have perished from want of bread, and from the noisome pestilence; while an appalling plague sits at our door, ready to enter and execute its commission. Are these things to be considered the proofs of God's complacency in us? Are we to sit down and fold our hands, and conclude that his anger is turned away? God forbid. Jehovah *is* offended. He has looked on while Baal and Ashtoreth have for many years been deified in our land; and now his forbearance seems to be giving way, so that his divine jealousy may vindicate his glory. It is certainly the duty of Christians to send over help to the perishing in Macedonia. Christ's kingdom must be extended, though many at home will not believe. But we ought also to regard with deep concern the sins of our own land. We are bound, alike by

Christian patriotism and piety, to pray for the revival of religion, and for times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord amongst ourselves.

Some whisper that our country has passed the zenith of her power, and that her sun is now on the decline. If it be so, it is the righteous punishment of our unfaithfulness and ungodliness; but perhaps it is not so. If, then, such a country as this can be saved by hope, let us cherish that hope, by casting down our idols and returning to Jehovah. In that case, if Britain repent in sackcloth and ashes, as did Nineveh of old, he may be prevailed on to withdraw these clouds. Our land may have before her, her brightest days; and they who now prophesy only evil, may live to see abounding blessedness. This consummation, however, depends on an honest and practical abnegation of that intense worldly-mindedness under which, for these past years, her people seem to have been spell-bound. May God in his mercy grant that we may be awakened to repentance, and set upon reformation, and that we shall all ere long be seen returning to him, and saying, "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy!"

II. THE FRIENDS OF RELIGION SHOULD EXERT THEMSELVES TO STAY THE PROGRESS OF SIN, AND AVERT DIVINE JUDGMENTS.—The disciples of Jesus Christ have his sacred truth deposited in their hands; and he has made them responsible for its maintenance and diffusion. For whatever they are made responsible, they are made capable; and if they refuse to employ their capacities, they must incur his displeasure, and be subjected to chastisement. Their paucity of numbers at any time, and their seeming

weakness, effect no change in their obligations. Whether many or few, weak or strong, it is still in their power, as it is ever their duty, to do what is enjoined in the way of promoting their divine Master's cause.

Principles such as these have need to be studied in times of defection from the truth; and those who are witnesses for that truth, should not shun to declare them. When a cause is popular, and on the ascendant, it gains around it crowds of patrons. When its reverses come, their applause is hushed, and it is abandoned. But when this cause of Christ falls upon dark days, and when its friends are few, then is the time that the voice of its advocates should be lifted up like a trumpet. Danger to life and property may be thus incurred, but incurred it must be; for Christians are enjoined to be "faithful to death," and to be ever ready to "forsake all and follow Christ." The world, it may be, counts these very unreasonable terms; hence, it refuses to have anything to do with the matter. The genuine Christian, however, counts all things but loss to win salvation for himself, and make known the glad tidings to others. The conditions thereof are gladly accepted, and it is his desire honorably to implement them all. These observations are illustrated on a grand scale in the lives of the apostles, and many of the primitive Christians. At the dawn of the Reformation they were luminously embodied in Wykliffe, Luther, Zuinglius, and Knox, who stood against the world for the truth's sake. All missionaries, indeed, in heathen lands, and every conscientious and consistent Lot in the midst of a crooked generation, act out these principles in their advocacy of the gospel of Christ.

And what else did the Tishbite? What a glorious exemplification of such principles have we in the scene

described between him and Ahab! The cause of truth was in the dust, and Baal was on his high place. Jealous for the honor of Jehovah; and grieved at the heart for his countrymen, Elijah, though alone and unpatronized, withstood the royal patron of idolatry to the face! He spake for Jehovah; not in a corner, but in a crowd; not in a whisper, but with a loud and significant voice; not in bland and studied phraseology, such as suit the manners of a court, but in stern and truthful denunciations, such as became the man of God; not with a multitude at his back, ready to carry him through his enterprize, but with a nation before him gnashing their teeth, and imprecating curses on his head! What cares Elijah? His life is not his own. If God chooses to take it, good and well; if not, then let it be consecrated to his side. What was the result? Truth triumphed; judgments were averted. Thus, having had it put within his power to arrest sin, and win a battle for his God, he used his means and did what he could. No more was asked of him; no more is expected of any of us; and he did wondrously. A more momentous battle was fought on Carmel than on Marathon or Waterloo; greater interests were at stake, and a far more splendid triumph was achieved. But what a contrast otherwise! On Carmel were thousands against one man; he was a poor prophet of the Lord; but he had faith, and he could pray, and he won the victory.

This teaches us what even one man can do in aid of the gospel, and on the side of philanthropy. He is a coward who will not stand to his side because numbers are against him. It does not follow that a majority is in the right; upon the subject of religion it often is not so. Read the great chapters of church history, and you will find that truth has generally

made her way to the throne against the hootings of insensate rabbles, often led on by men whose craft was endangered by her progress. As it has been, so it is likely to be. Christians, you have it in your power to stop the progress of sin. Having possession of God's truth, you are bound to circulate it. You have many opportunities of doing this, and of thereby rebuking sin, in the support you may give to projects for the suppression of vice, and the revival of religion, its defence at home, and its promulgation abroad. Near to you lie the materials for besieging the strongholds of Satan, and you have but to challenge the scorner, and you will conquer. You must conquer. What can stand long against the Bible, when projected by skilful and vigorous faith against the feeble defences of error? What unsupported buttress of the father of lies can long resist the force of a righteous man's prayers? What amount of exalted and exulting evil can long remain before the dauntless use of spiritual weapons by God's men of war? Soon, at home, and soon in distant lands, the pæans of Christian victory over heathenism, would make the arches above us resound, if every disciple of Christ were as the prophet Elijah. After what we have seen him effect, let no man despise the worth of mere individual effort in the cause of the gospel.

But there is more. By thus laboring for the ascendency of truth, the friends of religion may become the true benefactors of their race; they may avert the divine judgments. When Elijah persuaded Israel to abandon Baal, the bottles of heaven were opened, and the earth rejoiced in the refreshing rain. We recently were visited with drought and dearth, consequently, with famine, and disease, and death. These were our national judgments, and all traceable to our na-

tional sins. The men among us, our Elijahs, who could discern the signs of the times, betook themselves to more activity in God's cause; they convened the multitudes to the scene of confession and prayer, and the ear of God was filled with our cries. We had power with him, and prevailed. He sent us deliverance. Oh! it was not counsel from before the throne, nor wisdom from the senate, nor grimace beside the altar that did it. Jehovah did it: and he did it in answer to the prayers of the saints, and because of the contrition of the godly; these prayers and that contrition, having been offered for acceptance on the grounds of the all-sufficient atonement of Christ. Ay, and so it was, sneer as infidelity may; fanaticism, though the free-thinker call it; religion run mad, though some professors affect to think it.

We can do it again. Judgments are thickening around us; God is angry. The latter end may be worse than the beginning of sorrows. Let us blow the trumpet in Zion, and call on all men everywhere to repent. If we succeed in persuading our fellow-men to learn righteousness from these judgments, we are true philanthropists. The heavens are no longer as brass, nor the earth as iron. Prosperity returns to our merchandize, to be henceforth more justly consecrated to God; threatening pestilences are driven from our shores; hostile nations are terror-stricken before our majestic uprising, God putting the fear of Britain upon all countries; iniquity, as ashamed, hides her hideous face; and death, on his pale horse, gallops back again to his own dismal place.

We can do it. Well, then, shall we do it? Who can answer nay? Only let the Bible be more than ever the man of our counsel; prayer, secret and domestic, more than ever our choice resort; the precious

Sabbaths more than ever strictly hallowed, and their hours of rest more seriously guarded against secular invasions; only let the public ordinances of Christianity be more numerously attended, less for show, and more for spiritual good; only let our substance, as God has prospered us, be more liberally cast into God's treasury, for the conversion of the world; only let all ministers of religion be more in earnest in their ministry, and all the people more candid, humble, and prayerful in hearing; only let the churches of every denomination forget their minor differences in intense concern for the major cause of Christ and his truth; and I believe the dark clouds that lower above our land, and the darker ones that loom in the distance, would speedily disappear, and the gladsome days of peace, piety, and plenty would dawn upon a penitent and a pardoned people.

But, alas! these are not legislative measures; they do not smack of political ingenuity; they come not with the air and authority of worldly wisdom; besides, they are old-fashioned appliances; their employment is too easy, and their auxiliaries are too vulgar. What has royalty, or what aristocracy, to do with repentings and prayers as remedies for commercial panics and national disasters? and what have the men of this world to do with the severities of godly contrition and the aspirations of heavenly faith? Well, so they reason, and hence they refuse to try the weapons of our warfare. Let us beware, and not be coolled by their indifference, or intimidated by their ridicule. It is our duty to repress sin, defend truth, and implore the blessing from above; and it may be that, though unacknowledged at present, the destinies of our country may be seen hereafter, on history's honest page, coming forth, in all their grandeur and importance,

from the unostentatious piety of an age that haughtily asked our Elijah, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" or, that in derision cried after him on whom that prophet's mantle fell, "Go up, thou bald-head; go up, thou bald-head."

III. GOD WILL AID EFFORTS AND ANSWER PRAYERS FOR THE PROGRESS AND TRIUMPH OF TRUTH.—Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of human redemption —a work to which every other in the universe of God is inferior. To Him, therefore, who glorified God in rearing and perfecting it, all in heaven and on earth are to be eternally subjected. Creation is given to him, to use it as he lists for building up Zion. Providence is given to him, to carry forward by its means the resolutions of the council of peace; and it is as our Mediator that he handles the reins of government in both of these dominions, so as to make every creature and event conspire to advance the kingdom of grace. It is evident, therefore, that his glory is inseparably associated with the one cause of gospel truth in our sinful world. That glory is not promoted by his omnipotent fiat, which may every moment be bringing new worlds into existence, nor by the subjugation of every created intelligence to his divine pleasure, nor in the contributions of universal providences to the praise of his uncollegiated sovereignty; no; that glory of Jesus Christ, the Mediator King, is promoted by the homage of creation and providence to redemption, by the designs of God in the latter being progressively wrought out in the dispensations and works of the former.

The legitimate inference from such a truth is, that the Head of the church must take an absorbing interest in that by which his mediatorial glory is to be promoted; which means, that he will notice and bless

every effort made, and answer every prayer presented, for the prosperity of Zion. In his holy purposes to build up mercy, he, as it were, disregards the multiplication of those gorgeous temples of creation which display only his wisdom, benevolence, and power; and in his affectionate care to bring into his own presence the children who are to be "the travail of his soul," he seems to overlook the crowds of angels, and of other innocent beings who need not this mercy, and therefore only celebrate the praises of his bounty. What motive is this to effort and prayer amongst Christians! The hand that moves creation is outstretched for the cause of gospel holiness on the earth; the eye that comprehends in a glance the vast regions of infinitude, is fixed constantly on the apparently little kingdom of grace, silently but surely working its way in our world; and that heart which gives pulsation to all conscious existence, beats largely and strongly for the revival and mastery of the truth, as it circulates from him throughout the membership of his mystical body.

Why is it, then, that Christians, who have this truth in their custody, and who were made Christians that they might go and preach it to all the world; why is it that they are so backward to carry the war of the gospel into the territories of Satan? and why so timid about their success for recovering the world? Truth in itself is great, and must prevail; but the God of truth is greater than the truth, and he is on our side. It is truth we are maintaining; we may therefore be confident in the intrinsic excellence of our cause. Our leader into all truth is "the Spirit of truth;" and therefore we may without fainting pursue. Our shield is the blessing of the God of truth; and therefore we cannot possibly be wounded in pressing

forward to the mark to which He from on high is calling us.

These considerations impart value and dignity to the humble means of the gospel enterprise. The Bible may be disrespected as the composition of amiable but weak enthusiasts; notwithstanding, its circulation will put to flight the false religions. The preaching of the gospel, which is foolishness in the view of many, will, ere long, pull down the strongholds of Satan. The Christian pastor, prosecuting meekly, but earnestly, his sublime vocation, may pass unheeded through life's bustling colonnades, and die unlamented by the minions of Mammon; still, he has sown that seed which, in other days, will bring forth the bread of life to famishing thousands; and he has excavated that field of spiritual wealth, from whose mines shall be lifted the "pearl of great price," by which "the great globe itself" is to be enriched and beautified. The missionary enterprise may be tolerated as a project of innocent benevolence, or denounced as a piece of splendid hallucination; before its marches, however, and counter-marches, its sieges and battles, philosophy shall retire into the shade, confessing its incapacity to elevate the moral condition of man, while every shrine of idolatry, and every dogma of superstition will disappear, leaving the ground to be occupied by the temples of Christianity, and the people to be instructed by the oracles of God. Prayer to God, personal or social, as a mean to give efficacy to those weak things of the world which God hath chosen to confound the things which are mighty, may be hooted as impotent and drivelling; notwithstanding, the effectual fervent prayers of the righteous will avail to evangelize mankind. At the prayer meeting on Carmel there was only one man, and he uttered only

one short prayer. But how magnificent the result! Fire from heaven descended; Baal fell; Jehovah was exalted; Israel once more embraced truth, and imbibed life.

It is a trite saying that "money is the sinews of war." It may be so; but it is not the sinews of the gospel enterprise: prayers are these sinews. Money is needed; it must be had; but prayers are still more indispensable. Money contributed on the most munificent scale, cannot bring faith to, nor institute prayer in the church, and without both, the world never rises out of its darkness. But prayer can bring more faith to Christians, and when their faith is increased, so must their liberality. The Tishbite's prayer, without any of Israel's money, brought Israel back to God; but all the wealth of Ahab and Jezebel could not have withdrawn God's people from Baal, without the prayer of Elijah. Christians, study Elijah's attitudes on Carmel, when he prayed for fire and for rain. Can you conceive of any position more useful, more sublime? Be advised to occupy a similar one for yourselves. We do not bid you make any pilgrimage to Carmel. Remain where you are; but pray, like Elijah, where you are; and pray earnestly for the cause of godliness in this wicked generation.

IV. EVERY MAN IS BOUND TO BE DECIDED IN THE MATTER OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH.—All other questions may remain uninvestigated and unsolved, and the soul may be safe; but if the question of the truth of revelation be yet either a matter of unbelief, or of speculative investigation, then the soul is in imminent danger. There is more peril, perhaps, in the halt between the two opinions than in any other state of the mind, upon the subject of religion. Hence the prophet called the attention of Israel to the sin of their indecision.

It would seem that while they consented to worship Baal, there was among them some hankering also after the good old way of worshipping the Jehovah of their fathers. Elijah represents this as a most contemptible state of mind, and urges them to come to a decision at once, and either be idolators out and out, or else true and consistent followers of Jehovah.

And so would we now, in conclusion, urge it upon you who, though nominally Christian, have not after all made up your minds upon the subject of vital truth. You are at present attempting an impossible thing—the worship of Jehovah and Baal at the same time. Now, remember what Christ said, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." If you are using this world as abusing it; that is, if the great body of your thoughts and activities are about this world; then ye are serving Mammon. You go about, now wearing his gaudy livery, and now dragging his chains; now coaxed by his promises, false and vain, and now half choked with his dust and dirt. Only continue a little longer in his service, and you will soon reap in full the wages he has not promised, disappointment here, and misery hereafter. Your profession, we admit, is religious. You say you have made up your mind, and you do follow Christ. But you say what is not true; by your every day conduct you are condemned. That weary worldly life you lead, is certainly not the life of faith in God; and these pretty outward performances before his altars, have just about as little to do with true piety, as the tenant of the garnished sepulchre has to do with the consciousness, beauty, and joys of young life. Ah! thoughtless men, think, say what you please, but this awful truth stands against you, that you are yet far from God. If you say, We have taken up our abode in Christ, he replies, "I know thy

works, and where thou dwellest; even where Satan's seat is." If you say, We believe "the Lord is God," he will answer, "I know you, that you have not the love of God in you." If you say, "Other gods have had dominion over us, but we now call upon thy name," he will reply, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?"

It is surely more than time that ye were bringing this weighty question to an issue. You have tampered too long already with eternal truth; you have sported too long on the confines of light, without abandoning the region of darkness; you have provoked the Saviour well nigh, it may be, to depart altogether from your coasts, by holding communion with Belial, at the same time that you tell him that your fellowship is through him with the father. Oh, beware! It is not safe for the hypocrite and worldling to join themselves to the assemblies of the sons of God, with all their sins and indecisions strong upon and within them. Remember the same fire that comes down to consume the sacrifice of the unbeliever may fall in terrible judgment upon the mocker. The blood of a prophet of Baal has, ere this, been mingled with the sacrifice of a man of God—appalling termination to a life avowedly consecrated to the service of truth, but in reality sacrificed to the belief of a lie!

Many, alas! too many, professed Christians do not at all appreciate what is said to them about the advantages and felicities of a decidedly religious state The reason is, they will not let go their hold of the world; they refuse to step across the boundary that separates the dominion of God from that of Satan; they consequently never taste one particle of the gospel's fat things, and how then can they know that God is good? It is painful to contemplate the condi-

tion of some good moral men; they are almost persuaded to be Christians; they hover on the brink of vital truth; now they decide to take the blessed spring forward into its outstretched arms; but now the love of the world exerts its power, and they fall back again upon its treacherous bosom. Sometimes they are so nearly resolved to make the trial, that you would almost pronounce upon their doing so; but, in a twinkling, a return to Mammon quenches the desire, and all again is cold and dead within their hearts. Thus they live, often accusing religion, perhaps, as really deceitful in its promises, and never conducting them to that satisfactory state of mind which it professes to give and maintain; and thus they die. They die! Where? In the halt between two opinions. They were not altogether the world's, and now by the world they are abandoned; they were never God's, and now his gracious face they shall never see; victims of mere hesitation, dupes of a vacillating policy, terrorists as regards hell, compromisers as regards heaven,—they fall and are forever lost!

# MOUNT TABOR,

AND

# THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST.

In entering upon the consideration of the sublime scene of the Transfiguration of our blessed Lord, we pass from Old Testament shadows to New Testament realities; from the Shekina as a type, to "the only-begotten of the Father," who is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person."

The "Desire of all nations had come." The virgin's child was born. For more than thirty years he had tabernacled among men. He had called around him his chosen witnesses. They had often beheld his glory in miracle and doctrine; but the time of his departure was at hand, and he must confirm the faith of the apostles; he must attach them immovably to himself and his gospel; he must indelibly impress it upon their minds, that he was indeed and in truth the Holy One of God, concerning whom Moses, in the law, and the prophets, did write. This he did in a most striking and memorable form. To add the testimony of Moses and the prophets to his own, he summoned to Tabor the two illustrious heads of the legal and prophetical dispensations, and received from them their several credentials. These were laid down at his feet, and his sole headship, his mediatorial sufficiency and

supremacy, were by them acknowledged. Although, then, we now stand on the eve of the gospel dispensation, our conversation must for a little longer be with two of the greatest men of the expiring economy; and though it be in a new form that we look upon him, our adorations are still to be rendered to the same divine Being who appeared in the bush at Horeb, and in the fires of Sinai and Carmel. That meek and lowly-looking man, Jesus of Nazareth, is none else than the "Jehovah" of the Old Testament economy; he is the "Lord God of Abraham;" he is the "Angel of the Covenant." All along it has been his wont to make use of the everlasting hills for discoveries of his majesty; and when, in human form, he sojourns with men on the earth, we see him frequently ascending them, at one time making them his pulpit for preaching, at another his closet for prayer, and at a third, as in the scene before us, his Shekina for unveiling his glory. Let us go, then, even unto Tabor, to behold that glory, and worship him accordingly.

# PART I.

## THE SCENES ON TABOR.

THE MOUNTAIN—BATTLE OF MOUNT TABOR—NAPOLEON BONAPARTE—CHRIST AND THREE DISCIPLES ASCEND IT—THE TRANSFIGURATION—ITS MYSTICAL SIGNIFICATIONS.

Tabor, upon the summit of which the scene to be described is understood to have occurred, is situated on the northeastern side of the great plain of Es-

draelon, in Palestine, about two leagues southeast of Nazareth. It is considered to be the highest mountain in Lower Galilee, and rises about a thousand feet above the level of the sea. Though surrounded by other mountains on all sides, yet it is the only one that stands entirely by itself. It appears that on its summit are considerable ruins, the masonry of which is traced to the time of the Romans. Some think that these ruins must be the remains of the thick wall built round the mountain by Josephus, in the Jewish war. The view from the top is by every traveller described as of extraordinary beauty and great extent. "The path," says one, "wound around the mountain, and gave us a view from all its different sides, every step presenting something new, and more and more beautiful, until all was completely forgotten, and lost in the exceeding loveliness of the view. Stripped of every association, and considered merely as an elevation commanding a view of unknown valleys and mountains, I never saw a mountain which, for beauty of scene, better repaid the toil of ascending it." Each feature in this magnificent prospect is said to be exceedingly grand; the eye and the mind are alike delighted; and by a combination of objects and associations unusual to fallen man, earthly scenes which more than satisfy the external sense, elevate the soul to heavenly contemplations.

The upper plain of Tabor has at different times been under cultivation; but when from oppression or fear abandoned by the cultivator, it becomes a table of rich grass and wild flowers, which send forth a most refreshing and luxurious odor. In summer, the dews fall copiously on the mountain, and a strong wind blows over it all day. Thick clouds rest upon its head every morning, and do not disappear till noon. The

mountain consists of limestone, and, as viewed from the southwest, presents the form of a segment of a sphere; from the northwest it resembles a truncated cone. Its sides are mostly covered with bushes, and woods of oak trees, with a few pistachios of a beautiful aspect, and affording a fine shade. The crest of Tabor is table-land, of 600 or 700 yards in height from north to south, and of about half as much across, and a flat field of about an acre occurs at a level of some 20 or 25 feet lower than the eastern brow.

There is one circumstance appertaining to the modern history of this sacred mountain to which we may refer in passing, as forming a striking contrast to the solemn scene of which it was the witness nearly two thousand years ago. The historian informs us that the battle of Mount Tabor was fought in this locality, nearly fifty years since, between the French and the Turks. It was a sanguinary engagement, having commenced in the morning, when the French general Kleber marched his 3000 soldiers into the plain, to encounter the Turkish army of 15,000 infantry and 12,000 splendid cavalry. While the battle raged, we are told that a figure was seen standing on the top of Tabor, keenly surveying the conflict on the plain beneath. This was Napoleon Bonaparte, a name in many respects execrable, and at which the world has often turned pale. It seems he made choice of this elevation to watch his opportunity for a final and fatal charge. When, then, the wearied Kleber was well nigh despairing, this extraordinary man descended from the mountain, with only a single division of a small army, and with only one piece of cannon, and rushing to the rescue, completely put the Turks to flight; they were driven back towards the Jordan, where Murat was waiting to receive them and to hew them

to pieces. It is said that Murat declares that the recollection of the transfiguration of the Redeemer on the top of Tabor came upon him in the hottest of the engagement, and that it nerved him with additional courage. What an extraordinary perversion of a scriptural reminiscence!

The emperor, his generals, and their victories, are passing away into forgetfulness, and their memories will finally rot; but the scriptural associations of that mountain, and the plain from which it rises, will never be forgotten. In respect of these things, let us now sing with David, "O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end, and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them. But the Lord shall endure forever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment." "Thy name, O Lord, endureth forever; and thy memorial, O Lord, throughout all generations." But let us go away, with righteous abhorrence, from the demon of war, and watch the footsteps of the Prince of peace, on that evening when he manifested forth his glory in the manner narrated by the evangelist.*

According to his wont, our Lord had been engaged during the day, let us suppose, in the neighboring village of Nazareth, in works of benevolence, in argumentation with his enemies, in the endurance of their contradictions, and in the instruction of his disciples. He looks wearied, and in need of rest; but the Son of man has not where to lay his head. He is hungry, perhaps, and thirsty; but there are no refreshments at hand; no friend is near to offer him a cup of cold water. What shall he do? It is now evening, and the dark clouds obscure the distant hills, and veil Es-

* Matt. xvii. 1—13.

draelon in gloom. All is silent in the city, and all are sleeping in the plain. He watches the drowsiness of nature, after labor, falling upon his twelve attendants, and he leaves them to find repose where they could; but he quickly returns, and signifies to three of them that they must arise and follow him. They do so; as it is the invariable disposition of all who love him to go where he bids them, especially to follow when he leads the way. But do they not inquire whither he is taking them on a night so dark, and across a plain so wild and inhospitable? No, they do not. It is theirs to acquiesce, and wait to hear an explanation; not impatiently to demand it. The Lord is unusually quiet; he is evidently under the solemnizing anticipation of some extraordinary occurrence. The three discern this, and they do not intrude upon his musings. Still, curiosity may be at work, and they may venture to whisper among themselves what they will not remark to him.

If from Nazareth they have come, they have now walked fully six miles; a long journey at such an hour, and after such a day's fatigue; but it is not easy to fag when in the company of the Saviour, and when hearing the sound of his footsteps before us. At length a dark and immense object stands before them. What can this be? They approach it. It is a mountain! It is Tabor! The disciples watch the motions of their Master; surely they mistake; he is not going to scale such a steep hill, after such a long walk, and in such a wearied state of body and mind, and expose both himself and them to the dangers of an ascent in the dark? Yes, he is; for it is written, "He bringeth them up into an high mountain apart." Having reached the spot on which the exercises of the evening are to be observed, they notice that he retires a little

from them, and kneels down to engage in prayer. Some students of the oracles here think, that as he was thus employed, the weakness of the flesh came upon the disciples, and they fell asleep upon the grass. Let us not blame them; they were but men, and nature was overcome. Besides, he had asigned them no duty, and though they could not but admire his love of devotion, they felt that to imitate him in everything was impossible. If it be so that they did now sleep, it is singular that afterwards, when in the garden of Gethsemane he was agonized, these same men also gave way to the same infirmity. The spirit may be very willing, though the flesh be very weak. It is comfortable to us to reflect that "he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

How long he remained in prayer is not told; but, as he prayed, a very glorious answer to his petitions was given. Suddenly the mountain top became the scene of a brilliant illumination. Whereas all had been enveloped in darkness, now all is light. What can this be? Has the sun arisen before his time, or has some new constellation, like "his own star in the east," appeared to honor the Lord of glory? No. That light is not natural; it is the transfiguration of the Redeemer's body; not any change in its substance, but a change in its external appearance has taken place. Let an eye-witness describe it: "His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." So white, says one evangelist, "as no fuller on earth can white them." This need not surprise those who believe the Saviour to be "the image of the invisible God;" yea, even "the brightness of the Father's glory."

But who are these conversing with him so familiarly and so pleasantly? Have the disciples arisen out of

their sleep and gone to join their Lord in prayer? No; these are two inhabitants of the invisible word. If so, are they angels who have been accustomed to be with him in this grand manifestation of his glory, and who are here to strengthen him for the work before him on Calvary? No; these are men,

> "Once like us with suffering tried,
> But now with glory crowned."

The evangelist tells us that "they appeared in glory;" which means in glorified bodies; in the same kind of bodies that shall be given to all the saints in the morning of the resurrection. That body is to be exceedingly resplendent. It is evident that its lustre must be so, when, notwithstanding the exceeding glory of the person of Jesus at this time, these two were discernible beside him. Let us endeavor to recognize who they are. He who stands on the right hand of the transfigured Jesus is Moses. What sad scenes and vicissitudes have passed over Canaan and Israel since we parted with him on Pisgah! Then and there he died, but his body was hid by the Lord. Now for the first time does it re-appear; but whether it had been raised from the grave just this very evening, and conveyed hither, or whether it had been associated for a longer time with those of Enoch and Elijah in heaven, we cannot tell. Here, however, so much of the mystery is at last solved.

No man had been more highly honored in and by the church than Moses. His authority was next to supreme, and "no rival would be likely to subvert his influence amongst the Jews." To him who had been the penman of the Pentateuch; the conqueror of Pharaoh; the legislator and the prophet of Israel, all were willing to contribute their homage and support.

How exceedingly fitting, then, to this crisis in the church's history, is the summons given to this eminent servant of God to appear on Tabor on such a night as this! Whatever the foolish people whom he had so long to lead and tolerate, might think of him in preference to Jesus, here is he himself, after he had been dead fifteen hundred years, testifying to his Messiahship, and laying down the dispensation, of which he was the chief, at the feet of Mary's son. And why should he hesitate? That economy had served its day; it was but a shadow after all; and who would rejoice more than Moses himself in placing above it the mighty substance of the truth as it is in Christ?

But who is he that stands on the left of the Saviour? who is this? It is Elijah! There stands the Tishbite again; the hero of Carmel is once more on the tops of the mountains. But "what doest thou here, Elijah?" Where hast thou been these nine hundred years? What hast thou been doing since the day on which the waters of Jordan and the hills of Judea saw thy grand translation in the chariot of fire?—the day in the which thou didst, by a whirlwind, go up into heaven? Ah! many Ahabs have made Israel to sin, and many Baals have usurped the place of thy God, since last we heard thy stern reprovals of abounding iniquity! Elijah is here for much the same reason as Moses. He also had represented an important department of the Jewish hierarchy. He was the chief of the prophetical dispensation, and now appeared in the room of every one of them, from the days of Enoch to the days of Malachi. If the Jews clave to their lawgiver, they were also strongly attached to their prophets; and he could not expect much favor in their eyes, who should aspire to being their superior. Well, here is prophecy also bowing the knee to our Lord,

and acknowledging that he is the person to whom it pointed, and that in him ancient predictions are already, or are yet to be accomplished. How exceedingly appropriate, then, this selection from among the ransomed of the Lord, of Moses and Elias; who had, of all ancient Jews, been most distinguished for religion and usefulness, and who now united in giving honor to Christ as the great High Priest of whom the one in the law, and the other in the prophecy did write!

But is there nothing more involved in their appearance on Tabor than this? We think there is. It is admitted that the SHEKINA, that is, "the tabernacled presence and residence of the Most High," was an emblem of the Son of God; it was the principal theophany, or manifestation of the Deity, in Old Testament times. Might not this be the "flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life," after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise? Was not this the "Angel of the Lord," so often spoken of as appearing unto the patriarchs? Did not Moses, more than any of the sons of men, frequently behold this Shekina, at first in the burning bush, then on the top of Sinai, oft afterwards in the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, then in the tabernacle, above the mercy seat? and, more especially, was there not given to him, as a very distinguished token of divine regard, an answer to his prayer, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory?" "Thou canst not see my face," said the Lord: "for there shall no man see me, and live; but thou shalt see my back parts." Accordingly, Moses was placed in a clift of the rock, on the top of Sinai, and "the Lord covered him with his hand as he passed by before him, and proclaimed the name of the Lord." In the case of Elijah, again, he too had enjoyed interviews with the eternal Son,

and had seen the mysterious fire come down from heaven. On Horeb, he also had vouchsafed to him a vision of a most sublime description. There, while he lodged in the cave, "the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks, before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle."

Thus, it appears that, in the days of their flesh, both of these men had desired to see the glory of God, the Shekina; but they were favored only with such a degree of this mysterious representative emblem as their then frail condition could sustain. Now, however, that the "Angel of his presence" had been made flesh, and was dwelling among men, and now that the respective heads of law and prophecy were glorified themselves, their earnest prayers were literally answered. Each of them, in his mortal state, had been a witness for the Lord, and in a manner peculiar to themselves. Here, then, on Tabor were they privileged to identify the New Testament Saviour with the Old Testament Shekina; teaching us that Christ was not only transfigured in the presence, and for the instruction of his disciples, but in the presence, and for the gratification of these two glorified men. Having seen, long ago, the symbol, their eyes now recognized the reality. Now they got an understanding such as they never had before of the "Lord God, merciful and gracious," and of "the still small voice," heard on the occasions referred to.

These three glorious individuals, we are informed,

entered into conversation; and of what do they speak? "Of the decease he should accomplish at Jerusalem." What topic could be more appropriate? The hour was very near when that mysterious event was to take place; an hour big with the mightiest events. Everything depended on it. The truth and honor alike of Moses and Elijah, the salvation of a lost world, the glory of Jehovah, depended on it. Why, then, should not those who were so deeply implicated in its accomplishment, appear at such a season, to strengthen and encourage him to go forward? Often had he appeared to them, when he sojourned among men, to support their fainting hearts, and now it falls to them to cheer him on to the grand conclusion of the whole matter. How singularly interesting is this! The angel of the Covenant condescending to take countenance and aid from those whom he had employed as his instruments!

Blessed Jesus! we, too, would take thy yoke, and learn of thee; for truly thou art meek and lowly in heart. We cannot too much extol the sovereign disposal of thy life, when, before it was endangered, thou couldst make it the topic of thy talk with two glorified men; from which we learn that thou hadst "power to lay it down, and power to take it up again." We see with joy, and we acknowledge with gratitude, that what thou didst suffer for us, was suffered deliberately, and that thy decease was a voluntary propitiation for our sins. Amen; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

But what have become of Peter, James, and John? We left them asleep. It could not, however, have been of long duration. The transactions of Tabor must be witnessed, not only for their particular confirmation in the faith, but for the comfort of the whole Christian church. So soon, then, as they were aroused

from slumber, a glorious sight met their enraptured vision. How like to the surprise of the believing soul when it passes at death out of this shady scene into the bright visions of the skies! They had lain down in thick darkness, and the last position in which they had seen their Master was significant of his humiliation and dependence. What a contrast now! They can scarce at first credit their wakefulness. There stands the man whom their souls love, the same Jesus, and yet how changed! How passing lovely! How indescribably beautiful and glorious is that well-known face! Can it be he? or are they in a dream? They look around, and down the mountain side. All there, and across Esdraelon, is hid in midnight gloom; and yet when they turn towards the Redeemer, behold what glory! They must have been in some degree stupefied, else Peter would not have burst out with such a rapture as this, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." This is scarcely the place for entering into any analysis of this strange proposition. We only remark that it discovers his singular knowledge of the identity of the persons beside his Master. He had never seen either the one or the other, and yet he knew both. There is but one way of accounting for this; the discerning was supernatural; it was given him from above.

Our Lord made no reply to Peter. There seems, indeed, to have been no time for reply; for instantly on his uttering these words, down through the dark canopy of heaven came a great and bright cloud and overshadowed them all. Three men fell as dead to the ground, and other three men awaited the cloud's approach without a fear. How came it to be thus?

The one half of the company on Tabor that night were merely citizens of this earth; none of them had ever seen the invisible glory of Jehovah, and none of them had tasted of death, or been the subjects of a glorious translation. Now, it is written, that the eternal Father was in that very cloud. To Moses and Elijah this is no strange sight, they had seen it often; they were glorified men, and had seen it in the sanctuary above. But no mere man can see God's face and live. Hence, when our Lord comes, it is not only our duty but our safety to hide our face in the dust.

As the disciples lay prostrate on the ground, they heard a voice out of the cloud. And what did it say? O, glorious intelligence! O, good tidings of great joy! "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." On the word and assurance of that God who cannot lie, we therefore know that the sufferer on the cross was the eternal Son of God. Yes, Tabor, thy resplendent lights illumine the passage of the man of sorrows onwards to the darkness and horrors of the cross, and thy divine voices drown the shoutings and imprecations of the rabble at the foot of Calvary! We do not heed them. No sooner, then, had these words been heard, than the disciples feel one touching them. They start, and look up. It is Christ; but how changed again! The cloud is gone up; the light of the sun is away from his face and garments; and Moses and Elias are departed, never to re-appear in this world, till the archangel's trumpet shall sound. Seeing no man, save Jesus only, and hearing his encouraging words, "Arise, and be not afraid," they obey, and follow him down the steep of Tabor to the valley. Such was the transfiguration of Christ on

Tabor. The whole scene is vocal with eloquent and impressive testimonies, to a few of which let us joyfully listen.

## PART II.

### THE TESTIMONIES OF TABOR.

JESUS—THE SON OF GOD—MESSIAH—HARBINGER OF IMMORTALITY—CENTRE OF ATTRACTION TO HOLY BEINGS.

I. TABOR TESTIFIES THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.—Evidence of his personal relationship to Jehovah was indispensable, and for the following reason:—It was prophesied of old that the child born of the virgin was to be the "mighty God;" "Emmanuel, God with us;" and the angel, in intimating to Mary the future birth of the Saviour, distinctly told her that her son was to be called "the Son of God." To verify these premonitions, Jehovah, on two separate occasions, condescended to an audible proclamation of their being fulfilled in Christ. He did so on the banks of the Jordan, when the forerunner was baptizing him; and he did so on Tabor, when the glorified hierarchy were worshipping him. What can be inferred from all this, but that the Father attaches the highest importance to the doctrine of the Sonship of our Saviour? This need not surprise us; for there is not another doctrine in Christianity to be compared with it in point of value. It is the basis of the whole gospel structure; the sun in the centre of its system; the alpha and the omega of its theology. Hence, to understand Christianity aright, we must begin with

clear and simple ideas of the doctrine of Christ's person, or of the hypostatical union in him of the human and divine natures. Much, if not the whole of the confused and cheerless notions that many have of the Gospel, may be traced to their never having devoted their minds to this great and weighty truth, with its cognates. We are persuaded, that if the attention were first of all fixed upon this doctrine, and if distinct apprehensions were formed of it, the remaining lessons of Christianity, in all their amplitude and grandeur, would be more easily acquired, and would be a much more fertile source of comfort to the believing mind. Since it is so, what reason have we to thank God that there is such abundance of lucid and forcible testimony upon that subject in the oracles! No doubt the doctrine taught may in itself be mysterious; but, as to what the doctrine is that is there taught, we cannot remain in doubt.

To ascertain the truth we have only to open the Bible. Its pages are replete with evidence that the Redeemer of men is allied to them by nature, and also that he is partaker of the nature of God; in other words, that he is both God and man, in two distinct natures, but in one person, and that this union is to exist forever. Our Lord's claims of divinity were, therefore, unequivocal, and his works corroborated the truth of his words. It is not required in this exercise that we quote the Scriptural proofs at any length. It seems enough just to glance at the testimony borne by Tabor, which is not the least among the thousands of the Bible that bear upon the same topic. The voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." It is of importance to notice the use made by the apostle Peter of this divine testimony to the proper Deity or Son-

ship of Christ. That Messiah was to be the "Son of the Highest," was a prophecy in ancient times; but, says Peter, "this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy;" or, as the original words should be rendered, "we have the prophetical word made more sure."* How "made more sure?" By the voice, of course, which they heard from the excellent glory. If he is a Son, then on Tabor his Father claims him. If his Father be God, then what else can the Son of God be? The offspring of man is human, the Son of God is divine.

The application of this term, "Son of God," is made to Jesus with significations widely different from its application, in other Scriptures, to mere creatures. It is not a mere official designation to intimate his mediatorial relationship to Jehovah, but a mystical revelation of divine filial relationship. No doubt it is incomprehensible to us how a son, abstractly so considered, can be coeval and coequal with a father; but if we are to cast truth away on that ground, we may very speedily make shipwreck of the most of our faith. The fact of the Sonship is easily ascertained; it is the philosophy only of the fact that is incomprehensible. The peculiar manner in which, all along in the Bible, that language is applied to Jesus, teaches that it must refer to something altogether more lofty and inscrutable than the mere mediatorial connection. Perhaps there is no stronger proof of this than what our Lord's own words afford when conversing with the Jewish rabbi; and beautiful and consoling words they indeed are in many other respects: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that who-

* Βεβαιότερον ἔχομεν τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον. 2 Pet. i. 19.

soever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The apostle also, writing to the Hebrews concerning the obedience and the sufferings of Christ, very plainly holds forth his Sonship, not as belonging exclusively to his mediatorial character, but primarily to his original and underived glory as the eternal Son of God. At the eighth verse of the fifth chapter he thus writes: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Now, if the Spirit of God intended to teach that his Sonship was merely an official relation, a different form of speech must have been employed. In virtue of his voluntary engagement, as the surety of the better covenant, and of the commandment of the Father, and which he obeyed when he gave up his life a ransom for many, it was necessary that he should obey, and suffer, and "learn obedience by the things which he suffered;" "for it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Now, had he been a son in the inferior sense, the truth would have been much better expressed thus: "because he was a son, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered." It is not so, however, in the Scripture. The Holy Ghost says, "though he were a Son," that is, though he is a son, the Son of God, and from eternity bearing to the Father this infinitely mysterious relation, necessarily above all law, and therefore under no obligation to obey or to suffer, "yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." This is the grand proof and illustration of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and with which (the riches of his love,) the result fully and delightfully corre-

sponds. "And being made perfect," adds the apostle, in the ninth verse, "he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

Connecting, then, these Scriptures with the Father's two declarations of the relationship of Christ to him, we consider them as decidedly condemnatory of the dogma that Christ's Sonship is a simple official designation. The attempt so to understand and explain it takes away from us a very large and valuable amount of the evidence for the supreme Deity of the Saviour. As, then, we descend from this mountain, where his relationship to the Eternal was declared, let us testify to all who will hear, in the words of one of the witnesses of that night's glory, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

II. TABOR TESTIFIES THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH.—The Jews did not over-estimate the importance of testing the claims of the son of Mary to the Messiahship. Their sin lay not in seeking for evidence upon this point, but in rejecting the evidence adduced. It was sufficient to settle the question; we might say more than sufficient, only one cannot conceive of redundancy in the dispensations of God. By a long and divine course of training they had been taught to look for the Shiloh, and it became them to examine the pretensions of any one to be that personage; the more especially when we consider that our Lord himself spoke of the "false Christ" who should appear in those days. There were different classes of evidence led as proof of his Messiahship. The time of his appearance corresponded to what was the general belief on the subject. All the circumstances of his birth, birth-place, parentage, and early life, were in exact keeping with the predictions that went before concerning

these things. The whole manner of his life, from the cradle to the grave, was unique, consistent, and comprehensive, as regards all that was expected of him who was to come in the name of the Highest to redeem his people; and over and above all, his splendid miracles and divine teaching set the seal of Jehovah upon his powerful credentials. Such proofs were in everybody's hands, and ought to have commanded for him a universal and enthusiastic welcome.

We have reason to believe that more privileged persons, who lived near to our Lord's person, and were favored with his private friendship, received additional evidence to this of his Messiahship; hence the comparative greatness of their faith, and the manifest heartiness and sincerity of their devotedness to him. Passing by the charms of his familiar intercourse, the disclosures of amiable character, the development of the touching sympathies of a sinless humanity among the few to whom he unbosomed himself at home, the sustained and harmonious embodiment in his every look, word, and deed, of all he taught in public, and the indulgences he would allow to propose questions for information, and guidance, and comfort—all of which would unquestionably impress their minds with strong persuasions of his divine commission; passing these, let us simply refer to the evidence from Tabor, where he was transfigured.

The scene was only witnessed by three of his disciples; but this was a competent number. It was as much as the law demanded to substantiate truth or fact; and the force of the testimony is not abated but strengthened by the consideration of the witnesses chosen. They were, perhaps, the most eminent of the twelve, and the best fitted to be entrusted with such a grand discovery. Peter was to be the foremost of

them all in preaching the glorious gospel, both to Jews and Gentiles, after that Christ was risen from the dead. Destined, then, for such a distinguished place in the apostolic college, it was fit that he should be on Tabor. In a sense in which he did not mean it, "it was good for him to be there." JAMES, again, was to be the foremost of them all in the ranks of martyrdom, he being the first apostle who shed his blood in testifying to the truth. It was therefore good for him also to be there. And as for JOHN, the beloved disciple, we know how necessary his labors of love were in the infancy of the church, to diffuse harmony among the followers of the Lamb, and to denounce heresy among the enemies of his cross. He was the youngest of his fellows, but he lived to finish the volume of inspiration, and then, it is conjectured, surrendered his life that the gospel might not be frustrated. These three men bear evidence to the transfiguration, and their testimony must be received.

And who on receiving it can resist its force? If he who was thus irradiated with celestial glory—who was thus attended by celestial inhabitants, once great and useful among the ancient people of God, and concerning whom the voice from the cloud, which was the voice of God, so solemnly declared that he was God's Son—if he is not Messiah, and if this be not proof that he is so, who is he? And when Messiah comes, can he receive better testimony than this? Let us thank God that permission was given to these three witnesses to tell to the world what they saw that night. It must have cost them some self-restraint to keep it, as they did, so long a secret, even from their fellow-disciples; but when the time came specified by their Master for divulging the secret, how glad and confident in their Lord would they become; not per-

haps that any of them then doubted, but that this afforded additional confirmation of the truths they were now commanded to preach and to teach in every nation. It has been recorded for our faith and comfort in Christ; and we only answer the ends of its revelation when we meditate upon it as a proof that the son of Mary is not only the Son of God, but the promised Shiloh. It ought to be much reflected upon, in order to increase our sense of its importance; that if it were so, that Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah, then the redemption of the world is not secured, and all our hopes for time and eternity are on a false foundation. But the scenes on Tabor prove him to be the very individual of whom Moses and the prophets did write. As, then, we descend from its sacred summit, let us say to one another, and proclaim to all around us, as Andrew did to his brother Simon, "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, The Christ."

III. TABOR TESTIFIES THAT JESUS IS THE HARBINGER OF LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.—The divine purpose of salvation is declared by the apostle to have been made "manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." This scripture clearly intimates that these truths were previously in the dark, and that but for him, in the dark they must have forever remained. That the doctrine of the soul's immortality was hid previous to revelation, is true. We admit there were theories about it. The more enlightened and thoughtful of the heathen sages speculated on the probability of it; but further than a conjecture, unaided reason never ventured. The gospel let out the secret; and there are few positions from which that gospel is viewed, where the obligations under which it has laid mankind are

felt to be more weighty. Let us only remember that the truth of our immortality remains, even though we be ignorant of it; that to die ignorant of it is certain and eternal destruction to the soul; that the mere fears that it may be immortal have never led men to true piety, nor imparted to them true consolation; that the world was left for ages and generations to try its own capacities for discovering such a truth, and uniformly failed, even when coming nearest in its guesses to the invaluable doctrine; and that the proudest philosophical dogmas on the subject afford no security to man as a fallen and guilty sinner; let us remember these things when we read the gospel, which alone brings that grand truth to light.

Yes! that gospel goes throughout the regions of stupid superstition; it goes up to the high places of vaunting reason; it goes down to the depths of grovelling infidelity, and finds man groping about in the dark, and miserably ignorant of his own blindness. It then takes him kindly but firmly by the hand, and leads him down from Baal's heights, away from reason's groves, and up from the shambles of scepticism. Somewhat loath, in the pride of his humbled intellect, to be guided solely by this celestial teacher, he would fain hang back a little, to give partial recognition to the old blind guides he is commanded to abandon; but the gospel allows no compromise, and it forbids all halting between two opinions. Determined to enter man a pupil in the school of one called Christ Jesus, it waits not and wearies not till he is sitting at the Saviour's feet, "clothed, and in his right mind." What a change will soon be produced upon him! He listens to that master. His ears are filled with strange sounds, not only new to him, but full of exquisite gladness. His attention is now secured. The teacher

sent from God proceeds with his lessons, unfolding truth upon truth concerning God and futurity, man and responsibility, Christ and salvation, life and immortality. Witness the change upon the disciple now! He has heard enough. His mind at first is in the whirl of a mighty and overawing revolution. The shadows of the night are fleeing fast away; the terrorism of dreamy speculation is removed; the spectres of morbid fancy disappear; and he finds his soul in the midst of a great and shining light, almost too brilliant at the first for its eye to gaze upon. His conjectures have fled, and certainties take their place; his doubts are dead, and now he lives by faith; his reason is enlightened by revelation, and now falls down and worships at the shrine of that "wisdom which is from above."

The scene on Tabor is beautifully illustrative of this. There stand two men, one of whom died fifteen hundred years, and the other was translated nine hundred years, before Christ. Certain it is, that when man dies and leaves this world, he is still in existence; he lives somewhere in the universe of God, and is never to be annihilated. This doctrine is not taught merely on the mountain before us; it is practically illustrated. These two glorious persons were once dwellers on the earth; this could not be denied. Centuries have rolled away, and there they are again; changed, it is true, in most important respects, but their identity is indisputable. That is Moses, the man of God, and that other is Elijah, the prophet. Where they have been all this long time, and what they have been doing, we cannot tell; but there they are now, standing on Tabor's summit, beside the Lord of glory, and in eager and interested conversation with him, as still living and intelligent beings. Does not Tabor, then,

proclaim the immortality of thy soul, O man, O sinful man? It does. Arouse thee, arouse thee from thy lethargy, and let not thy soul perish through unbelief!

But before we leave this theme, let us look once more at these celestial visitors: it is long since we beheld them: their stay with us is to be short; let us make the best of it. True, they tell us that the soul is immortal; but they add to this a most interesting piece of intelligence, namely, that the body as well as the soul is to live forever. Moses died, and was buried by the Lord, even by him at whose side he now stands. It is therefore evident that by the Son of God his body has been raised from the grave; for there it is, and again inhabited by his now glorified spirit. That is the body once sown in corruption, now raised in incorruption; once sown in dishonor, now raised in glory; once sown in weakness, now raised in power; once sown a natural body, now raised a spiritual body! Yes! in yon resplendent saint is already accomplished the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." Let Tabor, then, take up the harp and sing to us, in the language of an ancient prophet, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Neither, my friends, let us be silent on such an occasion, but, as we leave this magnificent exhibition, let us re-echo these strains in the shout of faith, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

IV. TABOR TESTIFIES THAT JESUS IS THE CENTRE OF ATTRACTION TO ALL IN HEAVEN, AND THE MEDIUM BY WHICH THEY BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH ONE ANOTHER.—

On the summit of this mountain appeared "the first and the last, the wisest and the best of beings," the eternal Father. And who attracts Jehovah to this spot?—Jesus Christ, his own Son, and the Saviour of sinners! What love must the Father have to such a Son! what delight in his work, and what confidence in his faithfulness! To no created intelligence could Jesus be an object of such deep interest as he was to him who sent him. It was his Father's glory he was seeking in the recovery of that Father's lost children. Hence, all along, from the cradle to the cross, was our Saviour uninterruptedly attended by the ever-blessed Jehovah. At any period of his weary life, Messiah could say with truth, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." If it was so, when the accomplishment of the work given him to do was yet future, surely it is so still, now that that work is finished, and finished to the entire satisfaction, not only of infinite wisdom, but of infinite love. On the cross, to serve the mysterious ends of God's inscrutable purposes, the Father forsook his darling Son; but it was only for a very little while; for now, on the same throne, they sit together in heavenly places, Jehovah beside Jesus, and Jesus beside Jehovah. The attractions are mutual, and in either case transcendently glorious. It is an infinite love for the Father that governs this proximity of the Son to him, and it is an infinite satisfaction and delight in the Son that draws the Father to that august temple, where his only-begotten receives the worship of the ransomed, and administers the affairs of the universe.

But the same truth, with obvious modifications, may be affirmed of all the holy intelligences of the upper sanctuary. The appearance of Moses and Elijah on Tabor, tells us of the interest which the inhabitants

above take in the author of their redemption, and in the finisher of their faith. The commission given to these two glorified beings to attend upon the Redeemer on this evening would no doubt be joyfully responded to, and speedily would they wing their flight from the heights of Zion to the top of Tabor. Many a glorious sun, and moon, and planet, they might require to pass on their way to our earth, every one of them surpassing in created grandeur, and perhaps in moral and religious attractions too, the fallen world to which they were bound. But they looked not to the right hand nor to the left, and though wooed by the exquisite beauties of the Creator's power through which they travelled, they felt no inclination to halt by the way. To the old habitation of men, where they had been born, and where they had served God in their generation, they hied them without arrestment of thought or relaxation of speed. To be once more on that earth; to be on a mountain top; to behold again some display of Jehovah's glory; and above all, to see what they had never seen, and to adore as they never had done, the incarnate Son of God, who was about to verify all their ancient predictions, and thus secure the salvation of sinners; these, these were motives which so wrapt up their souls in intense eagerness, as to make them forget that there were any other worlds than ours, and any other mountains on its surface than Tabor, where the grand transfiguration was to take place.

Now, this speed of heart and soul towards Christ is a beautiful representation of what goes on at this moment in heaven. From all regions of the celestial country do they hasten to pay him divine honors. And this they do, not only because he is the King of that country, but because he is their Saviour. They

are universally and perpetually attracted to him, not merely to worship him, but to see him whom their souls love. Devotion and love are their wings; and it is inconceivable with what velocity, on such wings, they are carried into the presence of such a friend. On similar pinions, indeed, though somewhat clogged with the heavy dews of this Bœotian clime, do all his lovers here fly to him, that he may cover them with his own feathers, and ultimately raise and enfold them in his own bosom. But the most ethereal saintship in the church militant bears no comparison with the perfected holiness of the heavenly choirs now surrounding the throne of God. Above and around that throne they flock, in tens of thousands, by night and by day. They never weary of gazing upon him; they never cease ascribing praises to him; and they are ever ready to take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost of his magnificent universe, on his errands of love, of mercy, or of judgment. What ardor!—what zeal!—what enraptured love beam from every eye!—what swelling, gorgeous music isssues from every harp!—and what intense and uninterrupted worship rises from all the happy and pure "spirits of the just made perfect!"

The matter of celestial praises explains the reason of all this multitudinous flow of love and song towards the Lamb that sits upon the throne: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." On the earth they fled to him to hide them in his grace. In heaven they fly to him to share with him his glory; and no sooner are they there, than he places them all

on the same throne with himself. There are four and twenty seats upon that throne, capable of accommodating the whole ransomed of the Lord, and they shall be all occupied. But who are these bright and beautiful beings sitting on the circles beyond, singing as loudly as the others, but veiling their faces with their wings? These are the angels, who are also attracted by their Lord's glory to their Lord's throne, but who claim no superior right over these brethren who are arrayed in the white robes which are washed in his blood. They are not jealous nor envious, though a second place is assigned them; and though they are silent while the song itself is sung, they join—they all join—in the grand chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing!"

Thus to Jesus do angelic and glorified human intelligences all flock, in admiring and adoring multitudes. They are ever beside him, and he is as the sun in the midst of them, every one of them reflecting the glory that radiates from his divine person. What a sublime region, then, must that be which has the "image of the invisible God" for its centre, the whole of these pure and happy saints whom he has redeemed, for its diverging radii, and for its grand circumference the angelic orders! What a combination of all that is godlike in wisdom, and holiness, and joy! What a concentration of the essentials of that glory which is poured from the throne of the Eternal throughout all the wide range of his marvellous works! Blessed spot in creation's loftiest scale! when shall we be drawn up to thy light? when shall we be embosomed in thy bliss? O, when shall we hide in thy splendors our own divinely reflected, but minor effulgences? Haste, happy period! and, meanwhile, let us wait

without murmuring his coming who has said, for our comfort, "Behold, I come quickly."

From these cheering truths we may gather, that the heavenly inhabitants recognize and are acquainted with one another. If they were to live apart, and were never to meet, it might not be so; but as they are all irresistibly attracted to the Redeemer, and dwell in his immediate presence, they necessarily associate, and no doubt learn from his lips what is interesting in their several histories. On Tabor there was instant recognition, on the part of the three disciples, of Moses and Elias; and if in their mortal tabernacle they were enabled to make this discovery, surely, when we enter heaven with our faculties of discernment perfected, we shall be at no loss to know those especially in whom we feel the deepest interest. We shall find our way, first of all, immediately to the Saviour. Our natural affections at present are not safe judges as to what will be our first and strongest desire when we die. The inconsolable Rachel may think that when she has Paradise opened to her view, the first object she will look for will be her darling child; and so may we all conclude concerning those dear relatives who long ago bade us farewell. But such ideas, however natural, are founded on a misconception. We have seen our children, our parents, and our friends, and we think most readily of them in our realizations of future reunions. But, then, we have not as yet seen the Redeemer himself, consequently we have no idea of the exceeding fascinations of his beauty. The moment he is beheld, every other desire and every other recollection will be absorbed in the enraptured vision of him, to whom we shall then feel ourselves indebted for all the glory that surrounds us. But though it be so, there will also be the gratification of

our perfected natural desires. It will be, indeed, the delight of the Saviour himself to bring those together in heaven who were dear to one another on earth. He will not, on that account, fear any abatement of their supreme love for him. He will know that this kindness on his part must the more increase it.

That the saints shall know one another in heaven, is an idea favored by the passage under review. Our Lord's own words, too, corroborate it: "And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." In this scripture these three are mentioned, to intimate that they will be known as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in heaven. But why these three alone? Does not the same reason exist for the recognition of other illustrious servants of God? And if it be made out that certain of the saints are to be known, why may we not conclude that the power of personal recognition will be universal? We are told, besides, that the twelve apostles will be recognized sitting on their twelve thrones, and will receive the glory due to their rank, and their services in the church.

There can be no doubt but that there will be degrees of glory in heaven, and that they who have converted many souls to God will have greater honor paid to them, and will be stationed as brighter stars in the celestial galaxy. This arrangement, however, does not interfere with the privilege which all will enjoy in common, of recommencing a communion of love and friendship which was begun on earth, and interrupted for a season at death—not that we shall there be in every sense as to relationship as we are here; for it is probable that family bonds may not be felt there as they are at present. There may be nothing in the

parent, in the child, in the husband, or in the wife, exactly to correspond with those sympathies that co-exist in such relationships now. Still there is much to support the idea that all the pure affections of our nature, which here underwent the process of sanctification, will be consecutively exercised in heaven upon the same objects that attracted them on earth. The parental affections, for instance, are not economical simply, they are natural; they are bound up in our human constitution; they are essential to it; and as these affections would have been exercised perpetually, had Adam and Eve kept their first estate, we may argue, that they will, in some measure, find vent when we are in possession of Paradise restored. There will, certainly, be some very important and extensive differences; but many of the original elements of our natural faculties in such connections, will partake of no other change than what is indispensable from perfection in holiness.

# MOUNT OLIVET,

AND

# THE AGONY OF THE REDEEMER.

THOUGH the life of Christ maintained what may be termed (only, however, when compared with itself) a usual or ordinary course, the devout student discovers in it several extraordinary, or, as they may be considered, mystical passages. In these, there is a manifest introduction or conjunction of supernatural agencies, which do not appear in its common routine. It is observable also, that in these passages there is a very striking juxtaposition of painful and humiliating with consoling and glorifying circumstances; a sort of antithesis of events dark and appalling with others transcendently luminous and sublime. For example, his baptism, wherein we behold the heavens opened, and the Spirit descending upon him, and where the voice from "the excellent glory" proclaims him to be the Son of God, is immediately conjoined with his temptation in the wilderness, where the spirit of darkness assails and torments him. On Tabor, we behold him in all the splendors of transfiguration; now we are to witness him in the agony and blood of Gethsemane; and at last the tortures and death of Calvary are exchanged for the celestial concomitants of his as-

cension into heaven. In these three extraordinary combinations of light and darkness, humiliation and exaltation, weakness and strength, apparent desertion and supernatural acknowledgment, we find the day of his adversity set over against the day of his prosperity. The one, inclusive of the dismal class of events, indicates his mediatorial submissiveness; and the other, unveiling his divine glory, demonstrates the eternal Father's love to and complacency in him, together with his faithfulness to those covenant engagements, on the ground of which that Son undertook thus to become the surety of sinners. The transfiguration and agony of Christ, evidently constituting one of those couplets to which we have referred, ought to be considered consecutively. Our Lord himself seems to have made this conjunction of them in his own mind, from the selection of the same witnesses to both events. Having, then, been with him on Tabor, let us now go forth with the Man of sorrows to Olivet.

# PART I.

## PRECURSORS OF THE AGONY.

THE UPPER ROOM—THE LORD'S SUPPER—KEDRON—VALLEY OF JEHOSHAPHAT—OLIVET—GETHSEMANE.

Our blessed Lord had entered Jerusalem on the afternoon preceding his crucifixion with his disciples. In an upper room he had observed the feast of the Passover. In the act of observing he had authorita-

tively alluded it, and substituted the Lord's Supper—the design of which was to memorialize his sacrifice of atonement, till he should come the second time, to judge the world. He had indicated, at the same time, that one of his disciples should betray him; and, nothing daunted, the traitor had already left the room to perpetrate his execrable purpose. Immediately after supper, observing the grief of the eleven, because of his plain intimations that he would ere long be taken from them, he delivered his farewell consolations, as we have them recorded in those precious chapters, the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth of the Gospel according to John. When he had finished this exquisitely beautiful address, he offered up the intercessory prayer which we find in the seventeenth chapter; and having, in conclusion, engaged with the disciples in singing an hymn, "they went out unto the mount of Olives."

How astonishing is all this! It was the last night he was to spend with them on earth. He was on the very threshold of tremendously important and agonizing work. Already "the pains of hell had gat hold" of him; the deadly shades of Gethsemane and Calvary were gathering thick and fast around his amiable soul. That law, that good and holy law of God which he never had broken, whose promulgation from Sinai had been accompanied with such astonishing signals of the majesty of the Lawgiver, was hastening to visit upon him, as the sinner's surety, its horrible penalty. Jehovah himself was coming! The Saviour heard his voice in the garden, not as the guilty first Adam did, hiding himself among the bowers of Eden, but with solemn purpose to go forth and meet him there, with all the consequences of such an interview clearly apprehended. Yet here, amid his chosen witnesses, is

he calmly engaged in comforting their hearts, and in inspiriting them with the exercises of devotion. Surely to the work he now "sets his face like a flint." His "love is strong as death." "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

Having descended the stairs of the house where he had been thus engaged, he took the road that led from the city to the mount of Olives. The eleven followed him. The sun by this time must have gone down over the hills of Judea; its last tints were gilding the towers of the city of David, and the stir and hum of Jerusalem might be gradually dying away. On leaving the city, they came to the brook Kedron, which they must cross. In the hundred and tenth psalm, which is Messianic, it is predicted of the Saviour, that "he shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head." These words primarily refer to David's passage over Kedron, when, at the time of the rebellion of Absalom, "he went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered." It is therefore interesting now to witness David's Lord crossing the same stream, and going up the same eminence, full also of grief. In applying the last verse of this psalm to Christ, we learn his inflexible purpose, at all risks, to allow "the things concerning him to have an end." We are not told whether, like his illustrious type, Jesus did at this time refresh himself from the brook; still, the coincidence is remarkable. Having then traversed the dark and shady vale, by some understood to be the valley of Jehoshaphat, through which this stream ran, they held on their way to Olivet. The dismal appearance of the valley was no doubt partially relieved by the gentle light of the harvest moon—the passover being always celebrated when the moon was at her full.

Before they reached the garden, which occupied part of the level space between Kedron and the foot of the mount, our Lord entered into conversation with his disciples. He intimated to them that they would all forsake him; but, with amazing generosity and condescension, trysted them to meet with him after his resurrection, naming the place where the reunion should be effected. "After I am risen again," he said, "I will go before you into Galilee."

Shortly after this, they arrived at Gethsemane. And here let us pause to admire and praise him. Often had he traversed this same road, sometimes alone, and at others, as now, with his disciples. The evangelist tells us that "it was his custom to resort thither" with them, that he might recruit his spirit in meditation and prayer after the fatigue of a day devoted to the work which his Father had given him to do. On all former occasions, however, he had immediately before his mind refreshing communion with that Father, whose smiles induced him to leave the infidel throng of the city, to luxuriate for a season in the joys of their reciprocal love. But now had arrived "the hour and the power of darkness." The road is the same. Kedron's brook, swelled by the melting of the mountain snows, as before, gurgles, and foams, and hurries down its troubled stream. The moon diffuses, as of old, her silver light over the vale, and brings out in mild relief the undulating hills, where humble shepherds nightly watch their flocks; the cedar trees rear their laden branches to the sky; the lights in the habitations of Zion are receding from their view, and the scene of agony is at hand. The man Christ Jesus is also the same, though not the same the exercises before him. He goes as a lamb to the slaughter; and if he opens his mouth, it is not to speak of

escape, not to bargain for the aid of his disciples, not to complain of the treatment he was soon to receive from them, but to warn, encourage, and comfort them, when they should be scattered as sheep without a shepherd.

What fortitude is this! He might have remained in the city; he needs not choose the resort of which Judas knew. His life is his own, and he has power to keep it, as well as to lay it down; but onward he moves. He has "drunk of the brook by the way, and therefore shall he lift up the head." All this he did freely, all voluntarily. He saw the dismal end from the beginning. It was a way of his own seeking; and perhaps it was to familiarize his mind with the locality, and to embolden him for the appalling scenes of this night, that to this garden he so often retreated for devotion. Never, we believe, for one wakeful moment, did he hide this agony from his mind. "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Here Jesus was "more than a mere martyr;" for here, most composedly, he goes up to the endurance of sufferings, which impart, by comparison, insignificance to all the passion of which man can be the victim. All this was self-imposed; absolutely he needed it not, nor his Father, nor the law. He, and the Father, and the law, might have been all glorified in the everlasting punishment of sin; but, that the sinner might be saved, he must needs expose himself to the penalty of that law, and the righteous anger of that Father.

The mount of Olives, to which he thus wended his way, lies immediately to the east of Jerusalem. It consists of a range of four mountains, with summits of unequal altitude. The loftiest of these rises from the scene of our Saviour's agony, the garden of Geth-

semane; and, whether correct or not, is the one from which it is supposed he also ascended to glory. We are told, that about half way up is a ruined monastery, built on the spot where Jesus sat and wept over the city. It seems that the olive still grows there, and as spontaneously yields its fruit as in the days of David and our Lord. The view from the summit is said to be very grand, combining more interesting objects than any in the world: the valley of Jehoshaphat, the garden of Gethsemane, the city of Jerusalem, the plains of Jericho, the valley of the Jordan, and the Dead Sea. There is on the top a wretched village, inhabited by Arabs; and in the centre of this is erected a small octagonal building, marking the spot from which our Lord actually arose into heaven. The monks say that the print of his foot is still to be seen. This print is in the rock, enclosed by an oblong border of marble; and pilgrims may at any time be seen taking wax impressions of the holy footstep. But all such superstitious curiosities must give way to our solemn review of the mystery of Gethsemane, where the agony was endured.*

Gethsemane literally signifies "oil-press," or "the valley of fatness;" and such, some think, was the name given to a garden in that locality, belonging to a farmer, who had allowed the Saviour and his disciples the privilege of stepping aside into it, as they passed and repassed from Jerusalem and the village of Bethany. This name was given to the garden because of its abundant fertility. It is conjectured that it lay between two of those hills referred to as constituting the range called the mount of Olives. The place where it is thought the agony was suffered is still shown to modern travellers, who tell us that it is

* Matt. xxvi. 36—46; Luke xxii. 39—46.

about fifty paces square, and enclosed by a wall of no great height, formed of rough loose stones. "Eight very ancient trees now occupy this enclosure, some of which are of very large size, and all exhibit symptoms of decay, indicative of their great age. The garden is the property of one of the monastic establishments, and much care is taken to preserve the old trees from destruction."

So soon, then, as our Lord and his disciples arrived at this garden, he selected three of them to accompany him within the walls. The other eight remained outside. He said to them, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." He did not conceal from them what he was about to do, though he did not choose that they should all witness what he was about to suffer. Three of them only were qualified for such a spectacle. These were Peter, James, and John. Had the rest been admitted, they might have taken offence, and formed suspicions of the Sonship and Messiahship of Jesus; hence the kindness, as well as wisdom, of keeping them on the outside. The favored three, however, could be trusted. They had seen him transfigured, and might therefore be favored with the more awful sight of him agonized. Even from them, however, a portion of this night's tragedy was concealed, for we are told that "he withdrew from them about a stone's cast." This distance, considering that it was night, and that he was concealed among the thick foliage of the garden, formed a complete separation between him and them. But they were permitted to see enough to bear their personal testimony to an event in which the church of God has ever taken a most profound interest. Let us now shortly review the mystery of the agony itself.

# PART II.

## THE NATURE AND CONCOMITANTS OF THE AGONY.

SUPERNATURAL — SPIRITUAL — SPECIAL — CONTINUED — THE PRAYER—THE CUP—THE BLOODY SWEAT—THE ANGEL.

The earliest indication of the agony is thus described by the evangelist: "He began to be sorrowful, and very heavy;" or, as it has been rendered, "he began to be in great dejection, amazement, and anguish of mind;" which may signify that, at this moment, his mind was "penetrated with the most lively and pressing sorrow, a sorrow having the most shocking mixture of terror and amazement, which broke in upon him from every side with such violence that, humanly speaking, escape from it was impossible." Dr. More truly observes, "that Christ's continued resolution in the midst of these agonies and supernatural horrors, was the most heroic that can be imagined, and far superior to valor in single combat; where, in the one case, the spirit is raised by natural indignation, and in the other, by the pomp of war, the sound of martial music, and the example of fellow-soldiers."

Before retiring, that he might be alone during the severest pressure of this conflict, he uttered these affecting words in the hearing of his three witnesses; "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." This language is generally expressive of the nature of his agony, and more particularly of what it shortly afterwards became, when he was alone. It was then intensely bitter, even as the pains of death; and extensively bitter, as reaching up to the very article of

his death. Of what nature, then, was this agony of the blessed Jesus?

His agony was supernatural.—There was no natural cause to which it could be traced. For all that the eye of sense could discern, there was no such change in the mere circumstances of the Saviour as to warrant the use of such language. The disciples had often seen him in circumstances far more oppressive, far more likely to cast him down, and draw from him the most mournful lamentations, and yet he had never till now so expressed himself. Besides, considering his character for fortitude, patience, and magnanimity in suffering, we are shut up to the conclusion, that as on former occasions he had not given utterance to his spiritual distresses, so, on the present one, the cause should be regarded as most extraordinary—as, indeed, supernatural. Had it been an ordinary or natural cause, he would now, as formerly, have possessed his soul in patience and tranquillity.

His agony was spiritual.—This idea corroborates the former. It was sorrow in the mind or soul, and it was there alone, altogether exclusive of any corporeal pain. "My soul," said he, "is sorrowful." No doubt, by the day's labors, and, as we may conjecture, from the very chilliness of the evening, his body might be sensible of discomfort; but it is not of the body he speaks. All mere bodily torture he would have borne without a murmur, as the sequel proved; but it was internal anguish; it was the tossing into fearful tempest of every faculty of his mighty intellect; it was the wringing with grief of every affection of his amiable heart; it was the thorough penetration of heart and soul and mind with the barbed arrows of an agony, which, peradventure, not even upon Calvary

was surpassed in intensity and amount. "It was not," as a pious prelate has observed, "it was not the body that suffered now; the pain of body is but as the body of pain; the anguish of the soul is as the soul of anguish."

His agony was special.—For all that we can tell, he may have had other seasons wherein his soul had sorrow of a similar kind, and of supernatural origin. But in this garden there was a speciality about it, both as to kind and degree. He had been *a* man of sorrows all along. He was *the* man of sorrows here and now. Here and now he was as it were sorrow itself; a living impersonation of grief—not the mere chalice into which the wormwood might be put; not the mere vessel against which angry waters might be dashed; not the martyr upon whom hellish ingenuity might expend its roughest tortures—but an actual, a living, an intelligent, and, however mysterious, an innocent embodiment of all that is agonizing within the compass of intellectual or spiritual passion. We are told that the tribulations of the righteous are many; but we are also told that their consolations abound. Their peaceful spirits can look out upon the heaving earth and the roaring waters, assured that their God will be to them a refuge from every storm. Hence, secure within the bosom of divine benevolence, they can sing with joy, while all nature may be groaning with distress. In this agony of our Lord, however, there were shaking, swelling, and astounding elements, without one perceptible admixture of comfort; and this gave to it a speciality. Whatever it was, there was certainly at this hour cast upon him a concentration of bitterness, hitherto unparalleled, even in his life, and which, we believe, will remain an eternal secret in his own breast.

His agony was prolonged.—His former griefs had been intermittent. Moments if not hours of ease had been allowed to him from the strife of tongues, and the malignities of men and devils. Though sometimes he had not where to lay his head, at others he found shelter and repose in Bethany. But in this garden, an agony commenced which lasted on, as some read the passage, to the very hour of his decease. His soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even up to death," or, up to the time of death. There is some reason to believe that from this moment he had to endure the hiding of his Father's face, and that the terrific struggle that followed upon this, lasted till he gave up the ghost. If so, what a Saviour has man! We are apt to think that the passion of Christ reached its acmè just as he was about to expire, and that it was not till then that his Father forsook him; and that then, so horrible to him was this element in the cup, he dismissed his spirit to seek and find that Father, again to rest under the shadow of his wings. But if we are justified in the view referred to, that he suffered the forsaking of his Father from Gethsemane onwards to Calvary, how poor and inadequate are our conceptions of his patience, courage, and love! During the intervening hours of such suffering he opened not his mouth to complain, till at length, as if incapable to support it any longer in silence, he astonished the heavens and the earth with the memorable exclamation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

In the narration of this scene there is one most remarkable passage. We are told that, after cautioning the three disciples that they were not to follow him, but to continue in vigilance and prayer, "he went forward a little, and was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and fell upon his

face on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee. O my Father, if it be possible, take away this cup, and let it pass from me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt." It is not easy to give a satisfactory explanation of these mysterious words. It is evident that such was now his sense of that sorrow which was to be unto death, that it was proper that no human eye should witness it, and that he must pray in order to his bearing it. First of all, it appeared to be necessary that he should be alone, hence he was withdrawn from the three. Had they seen their Lord prostrated on the earth, had they heard such prayers as he then offered up, "with strong crying and tears," they might have fled from the spot, and the church must then have been deprived of their testimony as eye and ear witnesses. Perhaps their sleeping during the agony was permitted, that they might not hear his groans, nor be prompted, by curiosity or affection, to pry into the scene. A portion of the sorrow they must have seen, and a part of the prayers they must have heard; but the bulk of the agony, both in its conflict and cries, was by them unobserved. In addition to this, it may be noticed, that his retirement was proper, that he might be strengthened to suffer by fervent prayer. But what can be said of that prayer; for we are told that at three several times he offered it up, and pressed it upon God? "Extreme anguish," it has been said, "naturally produces recurrence to the one theme which gives it being and intensity;" and this repetition of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane has been thus accounted for.

The emphasis which our Lord places upon "this cup," calls for particular notice. It is manifest that it

can refer only to a certain portion of the sufferings. which he was now, and up to the hour of death, to endure. We cannot suppose that in so expressing himself he petitioned for entire relief from the sacrifice of atonement to which he had been devoted. "A cup is a figure of speech, which denotes not the whole, but only a limited quantity of the liquor which it may contain; as it is the custom of the father of a family, or master of a feast, to send to his children or guests a cup only of such liquor as he designed for them, but not the entire quantity." Dr. Doddridge upon this passage remarks: "To suppose that our Lord here prays for entire relief, is utterly inconsistent with that steady constancy he always showed, and with that lively turn with which he seems to disown such a prayer. It appears much safer to expound it as Sir Matthew Hale does, as relating to the terror and severity of the combat in which he was now actually engaged.

Now, in thus praying for a mere abatement of some of the pangs of that dark hour, there is nothing whatever derogatory to his character. He was man as well as God; and if he had a will peculiar to the divine, so he must have had a will peculiar to the human nature, otherwise he could not have been a perfect human being. "Hereupon," says the judicious Hooker, "the church hath of old condemned Monothelites as heretics, for holding that Christ had but one will." But even upon this interpretation, we are not to found any idea that Christ's will was now in opposition to God's, or that he would have preferred to have been relieved of his obligations. As a man he was now the "distracted subject" of some most mysterious conflict, some new element of grief was, for the first time, superinduced on his spirit, which he

specifies as "this cup;" and may it not be that from this particular draught he, for the moment, was desirous to be saved, and even that only if it were possible; that is, agreeable to the will of the Father? The threefold repetition of this wish indicates the dreadful nature of that draught; and if, as we have hinted, the hiding of his Father's face from him was the chief constituent of his sorrow up to death, we may cease wondering at his anxiety to have "that cup" passed from him. That Father's countenance had from all eternity been beheld by him, and in its smiles he had ever rejoiced. That Father's approbation had likewise been all along his strength and encouragement; and when it became necessary that he should see the veiling of the one, and feel the withdrawment of the other, a new and almost intolerable burden was imposed upon him. Dr. Bennet here appropriately remarks, that this prayer of Christ "may convince us that his sufferings were real; that his sense of pain was exquisite; that he had all the natural aversion to suffering; that it is innocent to seek exemption from pain; that there was an impossibility of our being saved without the Redeemer's sufferings; and that this cup was therefore administered to him by the Father's hand."

In the narrative of these awful transactions, there is one description of his passion which, though it demonstrates its intensity, wraps up the entire scene in "darkness that may be felt:" "And, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." We do not stay to inquire whether these were drops of actual blood, forced by mental anguish from the pores of his body, or only drops of perspiration large and clammy, as drops of blood are. By

either exposition, we are taught that the mental and spiritual exercises of our Redeemer must at the time have been almost intolerable, and such as to drain his very bodily structure of its animal subsistence. We see no reason why it may not be explained as being a sweat of actual blood. Such a phenomenon has been asserted by certain writers as not only possible, but as really to have taken place. Aristotle, and Diodorus Siculus both mention bloody sweats as resulting from extreme inward anguish.

It seems to have been at this crisis that a celestial being appeared on the spot. "There appeared," says the gospel, "an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." It is conjectured, and with some likelihood of accuracy, that this was Gabriel, the archangel. Jesus had been indebted to angels before this. They assisted him in his temptation; and now one of them comes to wait upon him in his agony. How strange to Gabriel would be such a spectacle! But with the secrets of God he had nothing to do, and he sought not to intermeddle here beyond fulfilling his commission. It has been supposed that Satan was in Gethsemane on this occasion, making a last effort to prevent the accomplishment of ancient prophecies. If so, here also was a good angel standing by the side of Him of whom Moses, in the law, and the prophets did write. By his presence and support he carried Jesus through the trial. And if it be so that the bright sun of God's smile went down over Messiah's soul at this hour, and left him under the thickest eclipse by which intelligence and consciousness can be enveloped, it discovers, after all, that there was, notwithstanding, left to him at least one sensible token of that Father's complacency. He would certainly know, that but for that Father's mandate,

Gabriel would not have presumed to appear in Gethsemane. Behold in this, O Christian, the pledge of thine own safety, even in thick spiritual darkness! If thou mournest an absent God; if thou seekest for him whom thy soul lovest, on the right hand and on the left, behind and before, saying, "He is not there; I cannot find him," be assured that thine angel, who has the charge of thee, shall be sent to bear thee up; and if the angel of God be near, the God of the angel cannot be far away.

But in what form did this angel assist the Saviour? It is said he was "strengthening him." The very sight of Gabriel would be strength to Jesus. He knew him to be the servant of the most high God, and that he would not, even in this scene of humiliation and suffering, refuse to obey the command given to him and all the angels at the birth of the Messiah, "Let all the angels worship him." There was, no doubt, mystic work on foot, of which Gabriel knew nothing; but his appearance would assure the sufferer that if hell was in motion, so also was heaven; and none knew better than the Son of God what power even one good spirit can wield over the legions of Tophet. It is likely, however, that this angel did more than console the spirit of the agonized man. That dear Lord, under the force of his passion, was dashed to the very earth. Yes, the marred face of Mary's son embraced the soil of Gethsemane! Three times did he fall, and three times did he rise. Three times did he visit his sleeping disciples, and gently rebuked them, and three times did he stagger back to the bloody conflict of prayer. And why should we not believe that on all these occasions this angel stretched forth his arms, lifted up the Man of sorrows from the ground, assisted him in his goings to and

from his disciples, and presented his sympathizing bosom, on which the aching head might lean? Was it not prophesied of him, "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up?" But to the causes of this incomprehensible suffering, it now becomes us to give our attention.

## PART III.

### THE CAUSES OF THE AGONY.

HIS FATHER'S WILL—NOT CONSCIOUS GUILT—NOR FEAR OF SUFFERING—NOR DISTRUST OF GOD—NOR MISGIVINGS ABOUT THE ISSUE—BUT DUEL WITH SATAN—EXPECTATIONS OF PROPHETS—THE PENALTY OF LAW—THE ATONEMENT FOR SIN.

Before looking into the particulars of this mysterious subject, it may be noticed, that in an important sense the agony of Christ may be regarded as one of the Father's own works: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." It was the Father's will that this cup should not pass from him till he drank it. Now, God never works without a design, never even in creation and providence, most certainly never in redemption. To the great God, then, as the representative of the Trinity, are we, in an important sense, to trace the work done in this garden; and his design in it, we must believe, was substantially the same with that which he kept in view in the entire humiliation of his Son, namely, the requirement of satisfaction to his law and justice from

the sinner's substitute. No doubt it was owing to the heartlessness and treachery of blood-thirsty men that the Prince of life was delivered up, and with wicked hands slain; so that secondary causes come into view when accounting for his sufferings and death; still, by himself we are taught that, in allowing these his enemies to siege, condemn, and crucify him, he was at the same time "going as it had been determined, while woe was unto that man by whom he was betrayed." Secondary causes, however, are not apparent in Gethsemane's work. On Calvary they are shockingly evident; but in the garden he literally treads the wine-press of his Father's wrath "alone." This very consideration leads us up, without the intervention of a single instrumentality, to God, the great primary cause of all. Having laid down this premise, let us now inquire into the causes of these agonies, as recognized, handled, and applied by the eternal Father, in obedience to the pure dictates of his sovereign and infinite love for sinners of mankind. We shall first specify some things that were not causes, in any sense, of the Redeemer's agony.

1. The agony was not occasioned by any consciousness of guilt on our Saviour's mind. He was "holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners." His very enemies being witnesses, he was an innocent and a just person. The cause of suffering to him, therefore, could not be intrinsic, but extrinsic. Connected with sin, and associated with guilt, he certainly was; there being a sense in which it was said, "he was made sin." "Terrible effects among men," it has been said, "have been produced by the lashes and stings of a guilty conscience; from this they have been in an agony; their souls have been pierced through with many sorrows; and even the cold and

clammy perspiration has bedewed their face, and moistened their very raiment." But such was not, and could not be, the cause of the bloody sweat of Jesus.

2. The agony is not to be ascribed, as Socinians have done, to a natural horror at and fear of the bodily sufferings which were before him. No doubt, the indignities and cruelties that he knew awaited him within a few hours, were fitted to fill him with loathing, and even with fear. But to suppose that this mere loathing and fear could occasion such agony, is to assign to him a lower position in the scale of natural and moral fortitude than many of his own martyred servants have honorably occupied. It certainly suits the godless system of Socinus, in which the doctrine of an atonement for sin holds no place, to account for the agony by ascribing it to a natural horror at suffering and pain; though, even upon this principle of interpretation, one of the numerous and gross inconsistencies of that system appears. All that the Socinian can see in or make of Jesus Christ, amounts only to an exemplification in him of the virtues which dignify and the graces that adorn humanity; but where upon this showing was there any exemplification worthy of being imitated? To the Socinian eye there appears nothing in Gethsemane but what tends to lower the character of the sufferer. His conduct there is a failure, a decided failure; his courage gives way in the moment and at the post of danger, where honor is generally supposed to be; his weakness is powerfully apparent, and his glory lies in the dust. Christ, in his sufferings and death, merely an example! If it be so, so far as Gethsemane is concerned, many a Christian has outstripped his Lord. Ay, many a heathen has, with more heroism, met and triumphed over the menaces of torture and

death. It has been suggested, that though "death by crucifixion was a very painful one, yet its shameful and stigmatized character was that which made it such an object of detestation." Death by burning, or by other diabolical methods which cruelty has devised, is thought to be more intolerable to man; and yet to such-like deaths many of Jesus' friends have been called, and they have obeyed the summons without terror of body, palor of countenance, or any other semblance of mental revulsion or terror. Away, then, with this contemptible and incongruous method of accounting for the behavior of our Lord, as if he, the great example, indeed, to the world, of all that is heroic in action and magnanimous in faith, could have faltered or been affrighted in positions where ancient chivalry has crusaded to admiration, and where the crown of Christian martyrdom has been often won!

3. And as not to the fears of mere bodily pain, so not to any distrust of the support or faithfulness of his Father can this agony be traced. It is written, "This man trusted in God, and he heard and delivered him." "The angel of the Lord encamped" round about him, as the pledge of that Father's pleasure in him, even in this night of gloom and terror. Never, for one moment, did the Saviour's confidence in the alliances of heaven become weak. In his duel with Satan he had trusted, and God had helped; and now, in his agony, he maintained that trust entire, and "was heard in that he feared." In every stage of his mediatorial service, his mind was sustained by the most perfect consciousness, that as it was his Father's work he was doing, and his Father's glory he was seeking, so throughout he would be favored with divine support; peradventure, not always, as not now in the garden, with an equal effulgence of light, but sub-

stantially both now and to the end, with the sustentation of that Father's hand.

4. From all which it must follow, that neither can his agony be traced to any distrust in his own capacity to finish the work which had been given him to do. He believed that the result of his sufferings would be God's glory in the salvation of sinners, and he knew that he would accomplish both. He had counted the cost before he began to build the temple; he had secured the charges before he ventured upon the warfare. This being the case, he must, from the very beginning, have been possessed with the thorough persuasion that victory awaited him. It was respect unto the recompense of reward that moved Moses to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; and it was for the joy that was set before him that Jesus "endured the cross, despising the shame." Dark, then, as was this hour, we cannot suppose that he had lost all recollection, or that he had ceased to realize the approaching glory, the glory promised to him as the Father's elect, and as the church's head. Even when prostrate on the earth, and when the chilling dews of eve were falling, and when every pore of his tortured frame gave forth its blood, and when the few drowsy friends near him were sunk in sleep, and when the agony of his soul wrung from him, again and again, those heart-rending prayers, and when already he might feel the stealthy tread of the traitor's foot in Kedron's vale, and already see in the distance the flitting lights of the torches, and already hear the suppressed chuckling of revenge about to spring on its victim: even in this most desolate condition, and with the horrible death of the cross before him, God's Son clearly and firmly embraced the glorious end of it all: and though for a time the joy

of that end was wrung out of his mind, yet his faith, his absolute, unfaltering, and unclouded faith, that such an end would be gained, never shifted its place, nor lowered its head; never bedizened its eye, nor relaxed its godlike grasp of covenant truth and covenant glory.

What, then, could it be that so tumultuously agitated the usually tranquil soul of our kinsman Redeemer? A general reply to this question is all that shall be attempted. The Saviour, anticipating this struggle, had, on this same evening, characterized it in a twofold way: "The prince of this world cometh;" and, "Father, the hour is come." From the former of these it appears, that in his agony he had a conflict with Satan, the precise nature, however, of which has not been revealed. It is not likely that it was of the same kind as his "temptation." Signally baffled on this ground, the adversary would not try it a second time. Peradventure, on this awful occasion, he would rouse himself to a last and dreadful effort, knowing or fearing that the hour was at hand when the seed of the woman was to bruise his head. We may suppose that Satan was by this time apprized of the peculiar death to which Jesus was to be subjected, and that his sufferings previously, as well as the death itself, had all been the theme of prophecy. It might now, then, be his object to falsify prophecy, by an attempt to destroy the fortitude of Jesus, and frighten him from his purpose to save sinners by a propitiatory decease. In furtherence of this, he might project diabolical suggestions into the pure mind of the Saviour, which might exert all the more appalling influence, that every element in that region of holy thought was essentially antagonist to them. The prince of this world did come to him; but Jesus could and did say with per-

fect truth, "he hath nothing in me;" that is, no weakness, no depravity, upon which he can successfully act. Hence, while his attempts agonized, or caused a commotion in the soul of Jesus, they were utterly abortive.

But there was more than this. In his intercessory prayer he had said, "Father, the hour is come." Yes; and such an hour never before had come, either in providence or grace. At this hour that Father expected that the prophecies should be verified, and the types fulfilled. Ancient seers and typical personages might now overlook their mysterious champion, to behold his wonderful vindication of their truth and honor. When we consider, then, the number and importance of these predictions, and the multifarious peculiarities of these types, and the unsullied majesty of that God, we need not be surprised if, within the soul of him at whom they all looked, and from whom they all exacted obedience, there began to be exceeding great conflict, beneath which, for a season, it appears as if overwhelmed. Truly, it was a tremendous undertaking for one man, and he a man of sorrows, to substantiate all that Moses in the law had shadowed forth, and to accomplish, to their minutest iota, all that major and minor prophets had written. As the angel or head of the Old Testament dispensation, he himself had reared the entire structure, had inspired every holy man of God, and had led forth the covenant of his Father, whether under Adamic, Abrahamic, or Mosaic economies, from the garden of Eden down to the garden of Gethsemane. He must now, therefore, be true to himself, as well as to those whom he had thus employed to foreshadow the great atonement of sin which was now to be made, and true to that God also who, at sundry times and in divers manners, had spoken concerning it to the world. At this hour, then, came

upon him all these claims of bygone ages; and hence the dreadful conviction by which he was agonized, that now or never the honor of heaven was to be preserved inviolate, and the redemption of perishing mankind secured.

What, then, was now expected of him? What was it that was now essential to the maintenance of the divine honor, and the happiness of the human soul? The reply is easy—His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. In other words, it was now expected of him that he would "make his soul an offering for sin." But, to be made a sin-offering, to his soul sin must of course be imputed; and then, if sin must be imputed, the whole penalty of the broken law must be exacted. The hour then had come when that penalty was to be exacted. He knew that it was to be exacted almost immediately; therefore did he command his soul to arise and drink that cup. His soul heard the order, and arose, though in agony, to obey. Perhaps never till this hour was the full view of the abominable nature of sin presented to that reasonable soul; never till now might the infinite heinousness of human guilt be scanned by his unclouded intellect; never till now might the ineffable horror of the wrath of an offended God, and that God his Father, seize upon his tender, trusting, loving spirit; never till now might he allow himself to realize the heighth, and depth, and length and breadth, of the satisfaction which law and justice demanded from a guilty sinner's surety. If so, then let it be considered that sin in any form, degree, or relationship, when presented to the view of perfect purity, must be the object of its detestation. Did not the angels desert Paradise when sin took possession of it? Did not even an earthly saint exclaim, "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell

within my house; he that telleth lies shall not dwell in my sight?" Here, however, was the Son of the Highest, the child of the Holiest, having nothing in him with which the devil could concert, voluntarily awaiting and challenging his most malignant assaults. Here he was, mysteriously connected with sin, that evil and bitter thing which his soul hated—ay, literally bearing sin, and bearing it too upon a soul of absolute perfection in holiness. Here was the Lamb of God, not only charged with "sins not his own," but suffering, through its horrible extent, their dreadful penalty; for "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Upon such topics it were both pleasant and profitable to enlarge; but we must now hearken to a few of those serious cautions and lessons which descend to us from this memorable spot on Olivet.

## PART IV.

### THE COUNSELS OF OLIVET.

MALIGNITY OF SIN—REDEEMING LOVE—CONFIDENCE IN THE ATONEMENT—GRATITUDE TO CHRIST—UNBELIEF.

I. GETHSEMANE PROCLAIMS THE MALIGNITY AND EVIL OF SIN.—No trivial matter could that be, which occasioned such a storm in the soul of Emmanuel. Death, and all the other woes that have come upon our world, tell loudly against sin; but the sufferings of the Sav-

iour at this hour proclaim the same truth with a far more awful emphasis. Sinners! go to Gethsemane, and study what sin is in itself, and what are its necessary fruits. The world's gaudy scenes are not the proper schools out of which to take lessons on such a theme. There the truth is concealed from your minds, and you are made to believe a lie. The imbecile strictures, too, of a merely ethical philosophy are not much better as instructors on such a topic. Some little excuses are there ventured on for poor human nature, and the hideousness of immorality is sometimes veiled behind the charities of a morbid forbearance. But there can be no mistakes upon sin from the lessons of this garden. After what has been declared from such an oracle, we are bound to believe that the scriptural accounts of it are all truthful; not exaggerated fancies, but sober and correct descriptions, such as fully justify God in his denunciations of it, in his punishment of it, and in the mysterious method he adopted to save its human victims from its appalling results.

II. Gethsemane proclaims the power of redeeming love.—Mere philanthropy could not have sustained such a shock. Yea, the combined benevolence of angels would have failed in this struggle! But the love of Christ was equal to its endurance, not only because it was perfectly sincere, and intensely ardent, (for this alone must have been inadequate,) but because it was divine love—yes, divine love for sinners was the main prop of the man Christ Jesus when he was passing through this ordeal. This love bore him upwards and onwards, as all the billows rolled over him, till he reached the haven of his Father's bosom, which received his spirit. Not one of the angry waters could quench that love. It was strong as

death. He who can analyze the mixture of the cup which our Saviour here drank, and not resolve all into the most transcendent and incomprehensible love for man, must either be grossly infidel, or wickedly indifferent. That man is greatly to be pitied who can listen to the cries, and witness the tears and blood of Christ on this night, and not retire to his chamber more thoroughly disgusted than ever with sin, and more enchanted than ever with the Saviour from it.

III. GETHSEMANE PROCLAIMS THE DUTY OF JOYFUL CONFIDENCE IN THE ATONEMENT.—Believer, this is of course your duty. Surely you cannot question your personal interest in these agonies. The griefs borne there were yours; the sorrows carried there were yours; and these griefs and sorrows were occasioned by your sins. This is true, and what follows? It follows that your sins can never rise up against you; your curse is exhausted; it spent its fury on your Surety. Let this then, henceforth, be your address to Christ: Lord Jesus, from this moment I cast from me all doubts as to my personal safety now, as to my eternal happiness hereafter; and if at any time of infirmity, fears for my soul should rush in to vex me, I will remember the night when thy soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; and even to my own death I will essay to preserve my own soul exceeding joyful in thy love. Yes, Lord, whatever may have been the number or aggravation of my sins, though I may have been a sinner of deeper dye than ever trod this earth, I will now, by thy grace, banish from me the terrors of the law; I will quail no more before the baring of God's holy arm, or the sheen and sharpness of his sword. For, when I look upon thee, my God, my kinsman Redeemer, at the hour and amid the powers of darkness, I am assured that the law has

been satisfied, that the divine arm has dealt its deadliest stroke, and that the sword of inflexible justice must now be sheathed, since it had such an awakening against the man that was God's fellow. Believer, you commit no presumptuous sin in thus assuring your heart in Christ before God; only hold fast your confidence, and let none take it from you, and thus all will be well with thy soul—at present in Christian conflict, in a short time in combat with the King of Terrors—at the great tribunal of God when you come to judgment, and throughout eternity in the presence of God and the Lamb.

IV. Gethsemane proclaims the duty of ardent gratitude to the Saviour.—All who have been washed from their sins in his blood will readily admit, that prompt devotement of themselves to him and his cause forever, is the very least return that they can make to him. Can you realize such a scene as took place this night, and, after associating your own sins with it, refuse to acknowledge that now "ye are not," cannot, ought not to be "your own?" That agony on the mount of Olives bought you for the sufferer. On the cross, it is true, the price was given in full; but even here, as much was advanced as should dispose you promptly to surrender all you are, and all you possess, to him, and to him alone. It is enough to bring the blush to the cheek, enough to suffuse the heart with shame, to think how coolly and miserly some professors can sit down and calculate, not how much, but how little they can do for or give to Jesus. What an ado, what a murmuring, what a scheming, what an evading, what a compromising, do we often witness concerning the duty of sacrificing our flesh, and giving our substance to Christ! It might almost be inferred, from the nice and minute arithmetic which

some Christians employ to rule them in their donations, that the obligations were all on Christ's part, that we had already acted out the character of the generous; and that for him to exact one farthing, one self-denial, one nonconformity to this world in addition, amounts to extortion, and ought to be resisted. Believer in Christ Jesus! make this cry to heaven: O merciful God! keep back thy servant from sordid avarice, from selfish indulgences, and from sinful extravagances, so that with a free heart, clean hands, and consecrated gold, I may vindicate my state as a forgiven debtor, and make clear my character as an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ.

Men and brethren, and all ye who fear God, be persuaded that there is at least one thing which it is impossible for you to do: you can never do too much for the sufferer in Gethsemane; for after you have done all, and given all on earth, yea, even after myriads of ages have revolved over you in heaven, you must still be infinitely distant from that imaginary point where you can say, I owe him no more—all my debts to him are paid. These debts can never be paid, either by yourselves or by any substitutes; because every breath you draw, and every moment of holy joy you have in Paradise, only add to the account against you for more gratitude and more service. What a pity, then, that Christians should calculate their obligations to Christ in unfavorable positions—in their counting-houses, for example, or places of exchange, or beside their farms, or over their merchandize! Ah, this is the cruel system that has hitherto kept Christian liberality a dwarf. If men would but sum up their accounts when meditating on Olivet or Calvary, when realizing the splendors of a celestial existence which they hope for, or the horrors of the

hell from which they would flee, from that day and hour Christian liberality would become, as it is certain, we hope, at no distant period, to become, a giant. May God hasten it!

Does the unbelieving sinner inquire, Have I any interest in these agonies? We joyfully reply, You have—most assuredly you have—God be thanked, you have! There is not a grander or more honorable position than that which the Christian minister occupies, when, from a gospel high place, he makes, in the room of God, a full and free offer of salvation to all who will accept of it, through the mediatorial sacrifice of Christ. This position, with Gethsemane so near, we hesitate not to assume; and to you, trembling and guilty—or even to you who, though guilty, do not yet tremble, is it boldly proclaimed, that for you, and for all mankind, there is enough and to spare in the propitiatory agonies of Christ. If, then, you perish, it cannot be from any deficiency in his agony, or shortcoming in his obligation. Be assured, God is sincere in calling on you, as he does at this time, to repentance and faith—sincere in telling you of a Saviour for the chief of sinners, and in swearing by his own great name that he has no pleasure in your death. If you perish, it must be owing to your own unbelief of God's sincerity and Christ's sufficiency; entirely owing to your contempt of the only name, and the only foundation given among men whereupon and whereby they can be saved. If you perish, it must be because you refuse to identify yourselves with the blood of the garden and of the cross, and, by appropriating faith, to make that blood your own. O! be entreated to believe that the sufferings of the Lamb of God were of the nature of that penalty under which you at this moment lie, and under which you

must lie, till you go up to God and tell him that you accept of his Son as your righteousness. Do this; do it now, do it in prayerful dependence; do it with all your heart, and, as the Lord liveth, it shall be well with your souls. But what if you will not do this? Why, then, there is no alternative: perish you must; having rejected Christ, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."

# MOUNT ZION,

AND

# THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD.

The very name "mount Zion," awakens most interesting emotions in the hearts of the people of God. It is associated with the history of some of the most illustrious men, and of many of the most remarkable events, connected with the Hebrew church and state; and it is employed in scripture to describe the present character, as well as the future condition of the church of God in that country which is an heavenly.

With regard to the mountain itself, strictly so called, little requires to be told. In describing the position of mount Moriah, we stated that it was one of three rising grounds on which the city of Jerusalem was built, and that the other two were designated mount Acra, and mount Zion. On Moriah the temple of Solomon was situated; on Acra many of the principal streets of the city were built; and on mount Zion were erected the chief buildings belonging to the kings and nobles of Judea. Here were the "bulwarks, palaces, and towers," which the psalmist extols. Zion may be said to have been the heart and strength of Jerusalem. Situated on the heights of the southern extremity, it was seen towering over all the rest. It

is sometimes called the "city of David," chiefly because he resided in it. The palace of the king was there. For this reason, perhaps, the entire city was sometimes designated Zion.

Of the literal mount Zion there are now no remains. The bare eminence may still be seen, but its "palaces and towers" are gone. It was prophesied that "Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps." This prediction has been accomplished many centuries ago. Because of the treatment given by the Jews to the Saviour, their holy city was doomed to destruction. Titus Vespasian was the instrument in God's hand for inflicting this dreadful judgment; and now the grass of the field may be seen waving where the city of David once reared its magnificent turrets; the heathen are walking in the streets of Jerusalem; the Turk has built his mosque on Moriah, and the city of God is now "the forsaken of God." Whether the time shall come when its ruined walls shall be actually rebuilt, when the lineal seed of Abraham shall take possession of its gates, and its temple shall once more receive within its sacred walls the tribes of the Lord, is scarcely worthy of inquiry. Events of far higher moment are in the womb of Providence, with regard to the progress and triumphs of the church; and it is of greater importance to hasten on the period when the whole earth shall be filled with his knowledge, than to define the seasons of any particular people's advancement from unbelief to Christ, from the world to the church.

It is our purpose, in treating of mount Zion, to consider, first of all, the subject of public worship, as that ordinance seems to be indicated in the religious festivals of the Jews held annually in Jerusalem;* and

* Psalm lxv. 1.

then, in a separate and concluding prelection, to take a view of mount Zion above, or the church in her state of perfection and triumph.

# PART I.

## THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD.

### PUBLIC WORSHIP A DIVINE ORDINANCE—OLD TESTAMENT TIMES—PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

It has been remarked that the religion of Nature does not expressly enjoin the public worship of Jehovah. Reason, however, though by no means an infallible guide in matters of faith and duty, seems to point to it as incumbent upon the intelligent creatures of God; and the discovery of faint resemblances of it among the heathen corroborates the idea, that to assemble for such sacred purpose is, to a certain extent, natural to men. It has been often urged, and most properly, we think, as one of the proofs of the moral obligation of the Sabbath, that among all people, barbarous and civilized, pagan or Christian, one day in the seven has, from time immemorial, been set apart for the performance of religious rites. Hesiod, Homer, and Callimachus, in their writings, characterize the seventh day as holy;* and other ancient authorities tell us that "the seventh day was a festival of every nation,"† "a day which all mankind celebrate."‡ So far, then, from superstition putting her veto on the

* 'Εβδομον ἱερον ημαρ.' Hesiod. † Philo.
‡ Theophilus of Antioch.

practice, it is singular enough that even by her influence, blinded and impure as she is, great multitudes of deceived devotees have, in all ages, been drawn to worship together before her shrines, often dragged as besotted slaves at her chariot-wheels, and not unfrequently sacrificed upon her Moloch altars. In despotic countries, too, where liberty is but moderately, if in any degree allowed, public meetings for religious services have not only been tolerated, but authorized, while gatherings of the people for any other object have been sternly interdicted, and, when attempted, often cruelly put down. Those who are accustomed to read the narratives of intelligent travellers, must be aware of the enthusiasm wherewith the vain Chinese, whether Confucians, or Taouists, or Buddhists, wait upon the worship of their false deities; and of the fanatical ardor which impels multitudes of Hindoos to swell the festival processions of Bramah, Vishna, and Siva. Into whatsoever region, indeed, enlightened curiosity has wandered, from the more civilized communities of Europe, to the heathens of Polynesia, striking illustrations of this practice have not been awanting. While, however, these semblances of the duty are interesting, as indirect hints of its being congenial even with the dictates of reason, our views regarding its sacred character must be regulated by express revelation; and here we can be at no loss to ascertain the divine mind.

Till men began to multiply upon the face of the earth, it is not to be expected that we should have, in the Old Testament Scriptures, any express references to the duty of public worship; hence the silence of the Bible upon the subject at the time of, and subsequent to, the fall of man. We can scarce doubt, however, that wherever God has had a people, and whenever

opportunities were afforded them, they have not been backward to assemble themselves together, to "speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power." Preaching, we know, has ever been a part of public worship; and there can be no doubt that this was an exercise in which Noah was often engaged when the ark was building. No sooner had the waters of the flood subsided, than we find this interesting patriarch gathering his household together while they, comprising the whole of the human race on the earth, united in offering sacrifices to Jehovah. Up to the period of the Christian era, sacrifices always formed an important element in worship. Abraham erected altars wherever he sojourned, and, for himself and family, presented offerings to Jehovah. In such practices he was followed by his descendants, Isaac and Jacob; but Scripture does not inform us whether or not the Israelites, during the period of their bondage in Egypt, performed the duties of patriarchal piety.

There is, indeed, reason to fear, that under the spirit-depressing bondage to which the Israelites were for so long time subjected, they allowed their own peculiar religious rites to fall into desuetude, and, peradventure, insensibly and sinfully imbibed the spirit of that idolatry which abounded on every hand. Degenerated, however, as the state of religion among them was at the time of Moses being raised up, there was evidently a revival of godliness under his remarkable ministry. A proof of this will be found in the request they tendered to Pharaoh, to permit them to go three days' journey into the wilderness, that they might sacrifice unto the Lord their God. When their emancipation was at length effected by the "right hand" of God, and after they had passed in safety through the Red Sea, we have then one of the most

impressive instances of public worship that can well be conceived. It is written, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." There are so many elements of sacred grandeur and sublimity about the whole of this scene, that we are strongly tempted to dwell for a little upon the reflections which it suggests; but we must refrain, only remarking, that it is highly probable, that from this time forward the Hebrews did not neglect opportunities to repeat the song which had first burst from their wondering hearts when they "saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore." Ere long, the law was given from Sinai, and then the whole arrangements and statutes of their economy were fully detailed, in which, especially, the extraordinary occasions for public worship occupied a conspicuous place. It is not necessary here to allude to these, farther than to state that, independent altogether of whatsoever acts of worship might be performed by them under the ministry of their district priests, or under the regulations of the Sanhedrim, when synagogues came to be frequented, there were three different times in the year when all the males of Israel were commanded to go up and worship before Jehovah at Jerusalem; these were the feasts of passover, pentecost, and tabernacles.

It is alike pleasant and profitable, when searching the scriptures, to notice the very significant hints of this custom of worshipping God in public during the periods subsequent to the ministry of Moses. For example, it was provided in the law that two silver trumpets were to be blown, to call, at the proper times, the assembly of the congregration to the door

of the tabernacle. We are told also, that when engaged at the time of the evening sacrifice in weeping, and mourning, and confessing the sins of the people, before the house of God, "there assembled unto Ezra out of Israel a very great congregation of men, and women, and children: for the people wept very sore." And on another occasion it is written, that when the "book of the law" of Moses was to be read, "Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and when he opened it, all the people stood up; and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered Amen, amen, with lifting up their hands, and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord, with their faces to the ground." And who has not heard of the devotional character of David, and of his regular habit of going up to "worship the Lord, towards his holy temple?" His beautiful psalms abound with allusions to the duty; and in the writings of the prophets, there are here and there to be found distinct references to the worship of the sanctuary. When, in the mysteries of Providence, Israel was taken captive to far distant lands, deeper poignancy seems to have been imparted to their sorrows, as by the rivers of Babylon they sat down and wept, remembering the songs they had sung together within the courts of God's house at Jerusalem; and one redeeming feature of the degenerate times in which the prophet Malachi lived was, that "then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name."

In reviewing the Christian dispensation, it seems almost unnecessary to say, that whatever abrogations

were made as to the ceremonial and judicial departments of the former economy, the spirit and substance of religious worship were retained. Public worship was not abolished. On the contrary, it was expressly legislated for, and provision was made for its celebration by the Head of the church. Ere he left the world, he instituted the gospel ministry, with instructions to the apostles that they should preach the gospel, and be, in general, stewards over the household of faith. He, by his example, as well as by his precept, did, after his resurrection, set apart the first day of the week for the duties of the sanctuary: and it was when on that day the disciples were assembled, that the influences of the Holy Ghost were poured out upon the infant Christian church. Moreover, all the necessary rules for the regulation, maintenance, and extension of the gospel kingdom are specified and enjoined, and these generally imply the assembling of God's people for public worship. The promise of the presence and blessing of the Saviour is specially directed to the meetings of the saints in his name. The very nature of the two symbolic ordinances of Christianity, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, implies publicity in their observance; and indeed the design of their institution would be lost if they were otherwise than publicly solemnized. On the other hand, the Acts of the Apostles, which to the church stand in the place of direct authority from the Saviour himself, clearly illustrate, and most unequivocally enjoin the duty. "Let us consider one another," says Paul, "to provoke unto love, and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is"

A superficial acquaintance with the history of what may be called primitive Christianity, must convince us how regularly and courageously this sacred duty

was observed and perpetuated. "All Christians," says Mosheim, "were unanimous in setting apart the first day of the week, on which the triumphant Saviour arose from the dead, for the solemn celebration of public worship. This pious custom, which was derived from the example of the church at Jerusalem, was founded upon the express appointment of the apostles, who consecrated that day to the same purpose, and was observed universally throughout all the Christian churches, as appears from the united testimonies of the most creditable writers."* "Let us no more Sabbatise," says Ignatius, who was a companion of the apostles; "let us keep the Lord's-day, on which our Life arose." "On the day called Sunday," writes Justyn Martyr, who lived in the second century, "is an assembly of all who live in the city or country; and the memoirs of the apostles and writings of the prophets are read." And Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, corroborates the testimony of all the fathers. "Every one of us Christians," says he, "keep the Sabbath, meditating in the law, and rejoicing in the works of the Lord." Now, these uninspired, but well-authenticated statements become exceedingly interesting to the pious mind, when associated with the lofty spirit of enterprise, and the fearless fortitude wherewith the righteous, in these dark and bloody times, maintained a regular observance of this duty.

At that period, it was not so good and pleasant, as it has been since, for "brethren to dwell together in unity." The Roman law not only frowned upon, but peremptorily interdicted Christian assemblies. Trajan was not the only autocrat who anathematized the public worship of their God; nor was Pliny the only

* Mosheim, Cent. I. Chap. iv. Sec. iv.

sycophant that liberally interpreted the imperial edict to scatter them to the winds. Notwithstanding, they braved the rage of their enemies, and met together, sometimes even at the midnight hour, till the crowing of the cock warned them of the re-opening of the sanguinary amphitheatre. These were days when Christianity was indeed a reality. The testimonies of saints had then to be given amid the tragedies of martyrdom. Let us never cease to acknowledge our debt of gratitude to those who thus earnestly contended for the faith.

Having thus ascertained the divine appointment of the ordinance, let us now inquire into its peculiar beauties.*

## PART II.

### THE BEAUTIES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

MORAL SITUATION—DESIGN—SEASON—EXERCISES—DISPOSITIONS.

Beauty has been defined to be that quality in visible objects in consequence of which their colors and forms are agreeable to the human mind. The strictly philosophical meaning of the term, however, is not always adhered to. It is often extended to objects perceptible by other senses than that of sight, and not unfrequently to the productions of the human mind; to a powerful argument, for instance, or an eloquent peroration, or a piece of fine poetry, or to appropriate and

* Psalm xlviii.

striking figures. This term is also transferred to the scenes and services of the sanctuary, where a sense of what is strictly spiritual may be said to predominate over other objects only physically or intellectually beautiful. It were an easy matter to go over all that appertains to the public ordinances of our faith, and characterize all as beautiful. A few cursory allusions, however, must suffice.

Of the architectural beauties of those buildings wherein the worship of God may be publicly celebrated we are not called upon to speak. It is upon the moral and religious aspects of the ordinance that we ought to meditate. These are its chief attractions to the saint; the charms that at first arrested his attention, and that multiply their fascinations around him the longer he stands within the gates of Jerusalem. But for these, indeed, it must have been obsolete long ago. The church, the world, both are indebted to these; for, despite of every opposition from the earth, or from beneath the earth, public worship remains unto this day, one of the grand mediums by which man draws near to God, and God holds fellowship with man. Who that meditates on the scriptural references to the subject can fail to notice the eloquent tributes that are, not lavishly, but justly paid to its peculiar beauties? When the inspired penmen advert to them, they can scarcely restrain their enthusiastic applause of the courts of the living God; nor will the cordiality wherewith the pious disciple of Jesus goes up to his humble sanctuary, suffer by comparison with the attachment of the devout Jew to the holy hill of Zion. The ordinance may be seen from different positions; and according as it is viewed through the telescope of faith from each of these, its several beauties become apparent. I shall humbly attempt to move this moral,

this sacred panorama before your eyes, conscious that with the great features of the picture you have been long familiar, but trusting to your ardent attachment to the subject, that another exhibition of its charms will neither surfeit nor fatigue your minds.

1. In the view of the saint the situation of the ordinance is beautiful. This praise, you are aware, was given to ancient Zion, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion." Again, it is written, "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." The temple, in the days of our Saviour, had one gate which was called "Beautiful." But this ordinance, in all its departments, is worthy of this praise, and perhaps in no view is it more deserving of it, than with respect to its situation. What is it? God has let it down from heaven, and placed it in the midst of a thoughtless, godless world. It is "the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man." Not more bleak and barren was the wilderness, in the midst of which the first tabernacle was reared, than is the moral desolateness of the scene by which the gospel temple is surrounded. Though it had no intrinsic beauties, it would become beautiful from contrast. The wisdom of the philosopher is set off to finer advantage when taken along with the imbecile efforts of the illiterate; the skill of the architect is more evident when his work is compared with some ruder structure; the solitary oasis appears more verdant from the sterility of the sahara on whose arid sands it reposes; the lofty mountain has a higher altitude the more level and extensive the plain is where it is fixed; and the piety of the good man diffuses a brighter halo, the more iniquitous the sphere is in which he moves.

Contrariwise, objects of inferiority become even more so, when contrasted with others of greater importance.

Ugliness is more offensive when set beside beauty; infirmity looks weaker still in the presence of the athletic; and duplicity is never so much detested as when opposed to uprightness and sincerity. Who does not dislike the weed the more, that it grows in the same bed with the tulip? and are not the shades of twilight more gloomy after a day of brilliant sunshine? It is just so with the ordinance of public worship as to its situation. No natural beauties, no moral grandeur, extrinsic to itself, may encompass it, but it is on that account all the lovelier an object. Is there no beauty in the mere situation of the hospital which is contiguous to the mansions of the diseased and the dying; or of the house of refuge which invites the orphan and the wanderer within its gates; or of the lighthouse which gives warning in the darkness of night to the bewildered pilot; or of the educational seminary which affords the means of useful instruction to the rising and circumjacent generation? These things gather much beauty from their mere juxtaposition to the objects for whose benefit they have been raised; and so does the ordinance of public worship. It is set up in the midst of a world lying in wickedness, where the people are all blind, miserable, wretched, ignorant, and naked, and to all their diversified characters and necessities does it impart seasonable and suitable relief. Better situated it could not be for poor lost sinners. It is near to every one of them; it is accessible to all; and all are invited to engage in its service, and to become partakers of its blessings.

2. In the view of the saint the design contemplated by this ordinance is also beautiful. For what purpose is the command issued, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors?" Are the people summoned together to deliberate on secu-

larities? Is this the gathering of a multitude whose superficial minds are to be "pleased with a trifle, or tickled with a straw;" through whose wide throats hosannahs may be poured to-day, and curses to-morrow? Are the people marshalled to go down to the battle field and imbrue their hands in human gore? Far, far indeed, are such designs from the conventions of the saints. They meet, but not to conspire for the pitiful profits of avarice; the tables of the money-changers are not within the porches, nor are the seats of them that buy and sell. The command to "open to God the gates of righteousness," is issued with a higher and holier design. The design is twofold; it is a design precisely of the same nature with that for which man was at first created, "to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever." This design is not served by the mere closet and domestic piety of the saints; for this ordinance contemplates the lifting up to the view of the inconsiderate and perishing world the great truth that there is a God, and that this God all are bound to acknowledge and worship. Wherever, then, it is righteously observed, it may be said of the worshippers, as God said of the Jews long ago, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God." While his glory is thus manifested in the public adoration of the people, the other portion of the design is of necessity secured. If God be glorified, man is benefited by it. He is by these means, as a sinful and unhappy being, brought constantly up to the bread of life, to the water of life, and to the word of life; and thus anew refreshed and cheered, he goes on from strength to strength, till he appears before God in Zion above.

3. In the view of the saint, the season for the observance of the ordinance is also beautiful. "To every

thing," says Solomon, "there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." What is it that is not beautiful in its season, from the verdure of spring, to the luxuriance of summer; from the golden tints of autumn, to the snows and frosts of winter; from the setting to the rising of the sun; from the merry prattling of infancy, to the exhilarating buoyancy of youth; from the sobriety of manhood, to the almond-tree that flourishes on the head of old age; from the tears that sympathy sheds in the house of mourning to the hearty joy she expresses with them that rejoice? Everything is indeed beautiful in its season, and so is the public worship of God.

The season appointed for it is the first day of every week. Not that it may not be observed occasionally on other days; but that, as "this is the day which the Lord hath made," so it is especially becoming in us to "rejoice and be glad in it." How beautiful are the works of creation! Yon brilliant orb, yon lovely moon, yon twinkling stars! this earth in all its ruins, how beautiful still! every herb, and plant, and flower! every rock, and hill, and vale!—all, all are beautiful beyond compare! If it be so, then is it not most comely that on the very day when the august Creator began to call the fabric out of chaos, men should meet to "extol his mighty acts?" How beautiful is the scheme of redemption! how profound in wisdom! how inflexible in justice! how unspotted in holiness! how omnipotent in power! how perfect in faithfulness! how benignant in love! and how rich in mercy does God appear in that work! Can there, then, be a more fitting season for its commemoration than on that day when it was triumphantly completed in the resurrection of our blessed Lord from the dead? Assuredly not.

4. In the view of the saint, the peculiar exercises of the ordinance are also beautiful. These consist in praising and praying to God, in exhibiting the doctrines of his Son's cross, and celebrating the symbolic institutions of Christianity. And where will you hear music so beautiful as the music of the sanctuary? Connoisseur harmonists may extol the famous overtures of Handel and Mozart, but to the well-tuned heart of the believer, the praises of God, as sung by his adopted children, are more thrilling and sublime. These are melodies which, to devout minds, excel in power and pathos, and exercise a more soothing and concordant influence than could be brought from out

"The swelling organ that lifts the rising soul."

As to the exercise of prayer, we ask if there is not a moral beauty, almost unequalled by any other service in the sanctuary, in the prostration of adoring men before the throne of God? There is scarcely a lovely feature in the Christian character which does not shine conspicuously from such an attitude, whether it be Humility, veiling her face with her wings—or Gratitude, telling over and over again the story of her obligations—or Penitence, striking on her breast, and sitting in dust and ashes—or Faith, embracing with firmness the pledge of the covenant—or Hope, lifting up her hands and her eyes to the heavens, where her anchor is fixed—or Charity, circling her golden chain around the group, binding each to one another as brethren, and all to God as their common parent!

The place where Jehovah's honor is said to dwell is called "the house of prayer;" but this is a designation that repels, rather than attracts, the thoughtless world. Prayer is, of all religious exercises, that in which it

sees the least beauty that it should be desired. And yet, to the eye of piety, how graceful is the suppliant's attitude! How lovely the expression of his countenance! how eloquent the strain of his petition! It is when he prays in faith and fervency that he approaches nearest to the description given of his Lord: he is then "altogether lovely." He may be a great man; but he is never so exalted in the eye of God as when he is on his knees. "Behold, he prays!" is higher commendation than if it were, Behold, he reigns! He may be a rich man; but he is not so influential in distributing opulence as in supplication. "Behold, he prays!" is a certificate of wealth better than charters and dispositions of property. He may be a learned man; but he is never so wise in cultivating his mind as when he submits it to the influence of the "Father of Lights." "Behold, he prays!" is expressive of more genuine wisdom than had all the ancients.

Prayer is strength and beauty combined. And when is the good man so powerful as when he enlists celestial alliances on his side? Prayer is holiness and beauty combined. And when is he so pure as when he draws near to God, and God draws near to him? Prayer is felicity and beauty combined. And when is he so happy as when, in the presence of the Redeemer, the burdens fall from his back, the tears are wiped from his face, the emptiness is filled to an overflow, and the spirit that was heavy is made to soar upwards as on eagle's wings? If there is happiness in security, he has it here; for here he is within the strong tower. If there is happiness at home, he has it here; for he is with Him who has been the dwelling-place of his people in all generations. If there is happiness in plenty, he has it here; here he is with Him in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. If there is happiness in hope,

he has it here; for he realizes now, if ever, his peculiar interest in that atonement from which he is soon to step into heaven. Strictly speaking, these may not constitute the philosophical elements of mere beauty; but as God regards them, and as man is the delighted subject of them, beautiful beyond compare they undoubtedly are, else they could not be so attractive to Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Is there not a beauty in the artless request which a favorite child breathes in the ear of a fond parent? Or rather, is there not a combination of beauties, such as the unaffected expression of dependence, the absence of all fear, the presence of love, and the power of filial confidence? Now, in the prayer of one righteous man, much more in the prayers of an assembly of righteous men, all these lovely features are seen in holier and grander development. Jehovah rejoices over them at such a moment, and only awaits their uprising to surprise them with an exceeding abundance; yea, with more than they were able to ask or think.

As to the "preaching of the word," which forms so important an element in this ordinance, we ask what system of truth is to be compared with that which the Christian pastor teaches? and what mode of teaching is so simple, and so splendidly efficient? The moral beauty of the Christian pulpit is unmatched. The microscopic eye of the natural man may not discern the exquisitely delicate and powerful operations of its spiritual mechanism; unsanctified genius may be more easily gratified by the prelections of the class-room, the eloquence of the senate, or the sophistry of the bar; and a morbid sentimentalism may prefer browsing upon the pretty shrubs and succulent leaves which bloom in the fairy gardens of fancy; but the Christian pulpit is the vice-regal throne of God, from which descend to

erring mortals, now the thunders and lightnings of his law, now "the still small voice" of his mercy in Jesus Christ, and now, and ever and anon, his most melting and earnest entreaties that the "wicked would forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," and, in short, that all the ends of the earth should look unto him, and be saved. True, man is the teacher; "the treasure is put into earthen vessels," and men, guilty men are the taught; but it is God himself that "gives increase." He makes "the foolishness of preaching" the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation. Oh! "how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

On the Palatine hill the temple of Apollo was built by Augustus, and here the Roman people were invited to listen to the recitals of favorite works by their popular authors. This was thought a beautiful spectacle; but does it not, and every spectacle of a kindred nature, dwindle into insignificance, compared with the preaching of Christ and him crucified, by the heralds of the cross, from the towers of Zion? And as to the celebration of the sacraments, what may we not affirm? Blindness, indeed, has happened to the man who sees no beauty in the approach to God's altar of an affectionate parent to dedicate his offspring to Jehovah, and to implore that as its body is sprinkled with water, so its immortal soul may be washed in the blood of atonement. And there must be more than blindness, there must be hardness of heart, about him who can contemplate the communion of saints over the symbols of the Redeemer's sacrifice, and not discover that this, in deed and in truth, is the public worship of our redeeming God "in the beauties of holiness."

All these exercises are sometimes performed at one assembly, when the occasion becomes emphatically impressive; but in any of them, taken apart and viewed by itself, much beauty, many riches may be discovered:

> "The pulpy acorn, ere it swells, contains
> The oak's vast branches in its milky veins:
> Grain within grain successive harvests dwell,
> And boundless forests slumber in a shell."*

Thus sung the poet when he anticipated the productiveness of an insignificant looking seed, and in similar strains may Christian hope celebrate the exceeding treasures that are embosomed in the ordinance of the public worship of Jehovah.

5. And, finally, in view of the saint, the dispositions which this ordinance calls into exercise are also beautiful. Hence, far hence are banished, not only "the lusts that war against the soul," but every temper and sentiment unworthy the man, and inconsistent for the Christian to cherish. Here, if anywhere, will be found the "fear of the Lord," which is said to be the "beginning of wisdom." Here is to be seen Adoration, with God in her heart, the cross in her hand, and heaven in her eye. Here Praise waits for Jehovah, and raises the loud hosannah, emulous of seraphic music. Here Devotion, with reverend hand, kindles her sacred fires, and prepares her sweetest incense. Here Meekness awaits an invitation to take her place among the sister graces, "afraid to go forward lest she should go wrong." Here are heard the heavy sobs of weeping Contrition, proving that "Beauty's tears are lovelier than her smiles." Here are not, or ought not to be, pride, or haughtiness, or any earthly distinction. "The rich and the poor meet together, and the Lord

* Dr. Darwin's "Botanic Garden."

is the maker of them all." Oblivious of the differences which the laws and the customs of society have ordained, Humility presides over the scene, and, "thoughtless of beauty, she is beauty's self." Here, in short, appear, in all the radiance of their celestial origin, Faith, Hope, and Charity, a glorious triumvirate, harmonious in their concert, and diffusing harmony among all the gifts of the Spirit; their influence is "as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion." All the dispositions, indeed, called up to the service of the sanctuary, or awakened into exercise in the house of God by his Holy Spirit, are just the sanctifying affections of the heirs of immortality, rising up in cheerful obedience to the startling summons of the Most High, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean."

But we must now, and very cursorily, glance at the substantial benefits that accompany and flow from this beautiful institute.*

## PART III.

### THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

PERSONAL—DOMESTIC—SOCIAL—NATIONAL—UNIVERSAL.

All the sons and daughters of Zion will admit, that advantages of the highest class are connected with the

* Psalm lxxxvii. 5.

ordinances of public Christianity; and if not all, certainly the great proportion of genuine Christians will be ready to acknowledge that to these ordinances they were indebted for those serious impressions which, produced by the Spirit of God through the preaching of the word, attracted them first to the Saviour, and ever since have bound them, in faith and love, to him and to his cause. I shall therefore only remark, generally, that public worship secures personal, domestic, social, national, and universal blessings.

It secures personal blessings, inasmuch as it is, for the most part, in the house of prayer that the sinner is converted to God: for of Zion it is said, "This man and that man was born in her;" and inasmuch also, as there the saint is made to grow in grace; there he increases in knowledge, faith, and holiness; there he gets his supplies of spiritual strength, encouragement, and consolations; and there, in short, he is made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

It secures domestic blessings, inasmuch as by means of it the parent is enabled to nurture up his family in the admonition of the Lord; to encompass them at least once a week with the sacred influences of temple worship; by means of this, to augment and empower his own authority over them, to secure their cordial attention to the culture of personal piety; and thus most materially to promote the concord of all within the family circle, and, by and by, to introduce them into society, prepared for its duties, and in a measure protected against its temptations.

It secures social blessings, inasmuch as that which tends to improve the individual and the domestic character must of necessity be productive of many blessings to society at large. As the family is made up of individuals, and as the peace and prosperity of the

family as such just depend upon the influence which religious principle exerts upon its constituent members, so it is with society. Society is made up of individuals, and of individual families; and its advancement in all that is morally good, in all that is justly blissful to the social state, in all that is honorably conservative of the principles of the social compact, and in all the plans and pursuits by which it may be enriched and exalted, must of course keep pace with the measure and the nature of these religious impressions, by which persons and families are controlled, moved, and regulated.

It secures national blessings, inasmuch as its grand moral lessons, its sublime moral example, its pervading moral authorities, all acting and reacting upon society, in its social, domestic, and personal integrants—all munificently dispensing an immense variety of temporal and spiritual blessings—all conspiring to thrust out from amongst us the vitiating and disgusting elements of sin, and all decidedly helping forward the cause of truth and righteousness—must, of necessity, exalt and bless every people to whom the institution is sacred. All this amount of divine control and spiritual treasure, which stands connected with public worship in our land, cannot fail to promote its great interests, and to command, for all its institutions and people, advantages precious in their relations to this life, but inconceivably more so, when viewed beside the life that is to come.

It secures universal blessings. Under this idea it were alike easy and pleasant to extend the illustration, and demonstrate the blessedness of public worship in the holy influences which emanate from its various spheres, and stretch themselves, not only from the individual to the family, not only from the family to society, and not only from society to the nation, but

from the nation to the world; but, though the theme be inviting, we must refrain, only remarking—that the evangelization of the world depends upon the church's constancy in the ordinances of public Christianity. What is Zion but the church of God holding forth the word of life to a world lying in darkness? What is Zion but the pillar and the ground of truth? Hence Zion is greatly preferred of Jehovah either to pious persons or pious families. The truth of God is no doubt sacredly enshrined in every sanctified soul, manifested in every religious life, and extended by every genuine believer. But no individual Christian, however excellent he be, is the sole or exclusive depository of that truth. Truth would survive the death of individual saints and of individual saintly families, but truth could not survive the destruction of Zion or public worship. Its life, its diffusion, its triumphs, are all bound up with the existence of the church in its collective capacity. The public assemblies of the saints have, as it were, the truth among them, and their public worship is as one central altar around which their united affections, energies, and prayers, are gathered. And why? Because there, in the holy ark beneath the mercy-seat, lie not only the tables of the law, but the records of the everlasting covenant. Not in Hindoo temples, not on heathen shrines, not in godless oracles, not in philosophy, or schools, or colleges, will truth be found, but alone within the gates of Zion. Within these gates truth, and truth alone, is professed; all other systems of religion are but "refuges of lies." Within these gates truth is revealed by the teaching of the Spirit, through the preaching of the word; within these gates truth is defended against the attacks of infidelity, the inroads of a sensual world, and the arrows of all evil powers and principalities;

and within these gates measures are concocted, and agencies employed, for subjugating the whole world, down to the end of time, to the kingdom of our God, and of his Christ.

Let us, then, rejoice in the ordinance of public worship, and do all in our power to honor and maintain it; and let this, among many others, be our encouragement, that while such a safeguard remains in our land, the cause of God is safe. Like the little vessel tossed on the Galilean lake, that cause has been often cast on stormy tides, but as yet it has never been wrecked. He who is the God of Zion sits in the midst as the pilot of the vessel; and though sometimes he may seem asleep, still it is enough that he is in the ark. All will be well, all will be safely guided to the haven of security and rest. Innumerable, in past ages, have been his providential interpositions, in order that while ancient empires were breaking up, and new dynasties were rearing, and when the wild revolutions of unsettled multitudes were overthrowing the established order of things, the church, bought with His own blood, might be carried safely and gloriously through all such turmoils, up towards the eminence he had himself chosen for her, and onwards to the victories he had determined she should achieve. "The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill, as the hill of Bashan. Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it forever."

The peculiar signs of the present times call loudly on all sections of the Christian church to stand forth, not merely to testify for, but to protect Christian institutions. There is certainly danger threatened to the ark of God, as well as the safety of the commonwealth. There are shakings in churches as well as in

nations, which may cause fools in both to learn wisdom, as they make wise and good men reflective and prayerful. Truly there are reasons why men should both fear and tremble. Before our eye is the dark proscenium to some "strange work" of God. Peradventure divine justice rises to be avenged on those nations that have forsaken him. And shall Great Britain escape? Let us reflect on the former judgments of privileged kingdoms. Let us remember that even Israel was cast away; that a period came in his history when he was blind to the signs of the times; and before his eyes were opened the Romans had sacked his city, undermined his temple, and butchered his children. Let us remember that the Goth and the Vandal overran the huge empire of the Cæsars, and utterly dismembered "the Niobe of nations;" and that the unprincipled master spirit of an age scarcely closed upon us, lived to see that mighty fabric fall, which his fearful ambition had upreared. Britain is in the zenith of her glory! Her armies have spread terror over the earth, and her navies have subdued the pride of potentates. Her treasures lie in glittering heaps to tempt the avarice of despotism; and her cities proclaim afar the rising splendor of her sun. Science has made choice of her to rear a deathless fame out of the deep, stern intellect of her sons. Art has laid the foundations of his monument within her rocky bed, to perpetuate the achievements of his mighty ingenuity; while Literature assists both Art and Science to stamp upon the favored spot a splendid immortality. Such now is Britain; but will she so continue; and how long? Heaven only knows. For all that we can tell, the hour may come when desolation shall blot out every memory of the past, and when, in the convulsive agonies of an ending era, her

very name may perish amid the conflagration that brings her glory to the dust.

If our country would escape from these menacing judgments, she must flee to the ark of God. The religion of the cross is her only, as it will be her sure defence. And in order to win her over to this, the grand palladium of her best and dearest treasure, the church of God must be up and doing. By our prayers and exertions, we must labor to give the ascendancy to pure and undefiled religion. Our stand must be made upon the truths of the Bible; and all our movements must be guided by their spirit, and directed to secure their extension and influence. And if it should please God to bless our exertions, and to answer our prayers, then may we hope that the dark cloud now hanging over us may pass away, and instead of judgments, mercy may descend to revive and quicken us in the midst of the years.

By all, then, that is awful in the voice of God, which has been heard in the economies of far back ages, as well as in that of modern periods of the church's history; by all that is persuasive in that voice which speaks in the still and gentle accents of the New Testament oracle; by all that is affecting in that voice which descends from the altars where our fathers worshipped; by all that is solemn in that voice which comes through the flames, and flows towards us with the blood of martyrdom; and by all that is terrible and appalling in that voice which issues from the shores of Christless, sabbathless, churchless lands; by considerations such as these, we would, in concluding, beseech you who are called by the holy name of Christ, "to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," every Sabbath within the walls of his temple. O! let it

never be said that superstition can convene her tens of thousands to bow the knee to Baal; that Paganism can gather her worshippers from all the ends of the east, and drag them over burning sands to pay their vows to monstrous images; that infidelity can secure to itself the thronged audience, only to be destroyed by its venom; that the temples of fashion, and the resorts of pleasure can be nightly crowded by deluded mortals who, in the giddy maze, are losing the realities of life to grapple with the shadow of death; that fanaticism can perform her wild and ofttimes disgusting dramas before her numerous victims, now delirious with her poison, and now writhing beneath her scorpion lash; and that the arena where this world's politics are discussed, can at all times depend upon its multitudes of gaping, gasconading enthusiasts;—let not these things be said, while Piety is left to weep over her deserted altars and desecrated shrines; while Reason, illumined and sanctified by Christianity, in vain associates with Religion to tempt you within the gates of Jerusalem; and while the free and elevated genius of the gospel fails to inspire you with that zeal for its sacred interests, which even heathenism can enkindle, and with that reverence for its ark and covenant which is not awanting where the temples are dedicated to idols, where the priests are besotted with sensuality, and where the oracles are so many mouths of the father of lies!

# MOUNT ZION IN HEAVEN,

AND

# THE HOME OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

The aids of geography, and the descriptions of travellers, have been our guides in pointing out the localities and peculiarities of the Mountains already ascended. But we have now come to "mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," where the principles of geography are inapplicable, and from which no traveller has ever returned to tell us either where it is, or what are its distinguishing features.* Moses and Elijah, as we have seen, once reappeared in this old world after centuries of beatified existence in heaven, but they told us nothing whatever of the secrets of this happy home; all we know of their discourse is, that it related to the decease which the Saviour should accomplish at Jerusalem. The apostle Paul was "caught up to the third heaven," and saw and heard many wonderful things; but the seal of secrecy was stamped upon his lips, so that on his return to the earth he maintained an unbroken silence, declaring that "it was not lawful for a man to utter" what he had been privileged to see and hear. In forming our ideas, therefore, of heaven, we must be guided

* Rev. iv. 1; Heb. xii. 22.

solely by the general hints of Scripture, and more especially by the figurative descriptions of the apostle John, who in apocalyptic vision had revealed to him, by the Spirit of God, some of those glorious sights of the future state of blessedness, from which we are to draw our inferences of its nature and enjoyments. The visions of the beloved apostle are, however, not to be literally or strictly understood. To what extent many of them may be found to be actually true, no man knoweth; but we are only at liberty to use them as conveying to our minds great abstract truths upon the subject of the glorified life of saintship. By the humble use of these we acquire all needful knowledge for our present condition, and for inspiring us with ardent wishes to find our souls at death on that mount Zion where "the Lamb stands." Having, then, already walked round about the earthly Zion, and considered some of her palaces and towers, let us, with all becoming diffidence, now ascend by faith, and in the light of revelation, to the city which is an heavenly, and meditate for a season amid its unparalleled glories. Into such an exercise let us beware of admitting any earthly or presumptuous sentiments. Here, if anywhere, we are upon holy ground, and now, if ever, we ought to put off our shoes from our feet; and may it be our earnest desire that, while we thus muse, the fire of holy aspirations after celestial blessedness may burn within us! In prosecuting the subject we shall, first of all, make a few general observations on the future state of blessedness.

# PART I.

## THE FUTURE STATE OF BLESSEDNESS.

### THE PLACE ITSELF—CHRIST'S FATHER'S HOUSE—PURGATORY.

Our knowledge of a future state is derived from the Bible. Reason, on this point, does nothing but form conjectures. That there is an innate longing after immortality in man, is true; but the mere desire for it does not prove that the soul is immortal. On this to us most interesting subject, revelation substitutes certainty for probability. It is especially the glory of the gospel, that in it Jesus Christ brings life and immortality to light. And not only is the doctrine clearly revealed, but in the scriptures there are many minute, though, withal, figurative descriptions of the very place in the other world where that immortality is to be enjoyed. There is no such topographical description certainly, as entitles us to say precisely in what particular region of the universe of God heaven is to be found; but we have enough to justify the belief that there is such a place, and that it possesses those inalienable privileges which are indicated by the mode of reference to them employed by the holy penmen.

The belief of the actual existence of such a glorious locality exerts a most beneficial influence on the mind, and it must on that account be exceedingly useful to have the evidences of it clearly ascertained. There is perhaps no truth more directly instrumental in sanctifying the soul than this, that a rest remains for the people of God; hence they who cherish such a hope are enjoined and expected to purify themselves, even as Christ is pure. It does not necessarily take from

the force of this truth, as a sanctifying element in the hand of the Holy Spirit, that we have no precise intimation of the very spot where heaven is to be found. Divine faith does not feel itself at all hampered or confined from the absence of such specific information. As far as his delightful meditations on heaven are concerned, it does not much matter to the believer whether he conceives of his celestial house as far, far away in some awfully remote region of the universe of his God, or as constructed so near to him as, that if his eyes were opened, he would, like the servant of the prophet of old, see himself surrounded with the inhabitants of the invisible world. It is enough to know, that wherever it be situated, heaven is, and must be, where Christ reigns, and where he is continually receiving the adorations of celestial beings. We know that in his human nature he left this world; we infer therefore that he still wears it, and that it is visible in some fortunate and blissful abode. We also know that there are saints in heaven, Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, whose bodies are made like unto Christ's glorious body and that those also who rose from their graves after Christ's resurrection, are all with him. Though perfected in glory, still their bodies require space in which to live, and move, and have their being; and the region of space occupied by them is what we designate Heaven.

Nothing so much tends to sweeten to the Christian the idea of death, as to associate with it the idea of heaven, into which at death he is immediately received; and nothing so powerfully recommends the idea of heaven to us, as to think of it under those homely figures which our Lord himself employed, when directing the attention of his disciples to it. He had been there. He was indeed the divine proprietor, and was

therefore qualified to adapt his account of it not only to what he knew was, in the abstract, perfectly true respecting its nature and blessedness, but to the modes of thinking and feeling on such a solemn theme, which might be appropriate to the sanctified condition of his people in this world. Thus, when comforting his disciples, in the prospect of his leaving them, he does not indulge himself in any of those grand and imposing metaphors, which are employed in some parts of the Book of Revelation, to describe the splendors of that place. The figure of speech used on that occasion is exquisitely simple, but touching and eloquent.* He tells them that his Father has a "a house," a house of "many mansions;" that he is "going away" to stay there; that when he is there, he will "prepare a place" in that house for them; that when he has prepared it, he will come and announce to them that all is ready for their reception; that he will then carry them along with him to the spacious dwelling; and that there he and they will live together through unending ages.

Such is a summary of the rich, though homely ideas, suggested by this metaphor. Let the devout mind take up with these ideas; let them be seriously pondered in all their different bearings on the felicities of which our natures are capable, and after which we have strong innate longings, and the result must be satisfactory; yea, very likely, it will be most delightful. Far be it from us to hint even, that there is anything approaching to extravagant painting in those more gorgeous allusions to the Paradisaical state which we have in other scriptures; these are certainly very sublime, and they elevate the soul; but they are, for what we may call the ordinary purposes of cheering

* John xiv. 2.

the hearts of God's people in the prospect of eternity, not absolutely necessary, and perhaps too resplendent, too dazzling for the weak vision of the saints in this lower world. It certainly is becoming in the Lord of heaven, when he speaks of his own kingdom and palace, to employ such phraseology as will suggest the idea of unparalleled glory; and when we, in our meditations, approach the august theme of that promised rest, it must be for edification that we have our minds sometimes overawed in the presence of its imposing grandeur. But the meek and lowly Saviour knew that with the glittering arrays of regal pomp, his simple-minded disciples were but little, if at all acquainted; therefore, when desiring to compose their troubled hearts with some idea of heaven, he uses the plain and ordinary simile of a house; in other words, of a home, a father's home, where there would be security, abundance, and perpetuity of bliss; where their unpretending views would never be abashed by disclosures of unapproachable dignities, and where their affectionate natures would be constantly gratified by the pleasing intercourses of domesticated life.

Of the endearments of home every bosom is cognizant; and perhaps there is not another metaphor which so happily combines in it all that is essentially peaceful, and all that is sacredly venerated. You will find ten thousand hearts that will leap for very joy, when an appeal is made to the associations of a father's house; you will find comparatively few upon whom the reference to courts, and crowns, and palaces, would have any such effect. All our knowledge of such high earthly places disposes us rather to think of them as either invaded by the maxims and practices of impiety, or pervaded by restless discontent and envy. Hence the kindness, as well as the wisdom of the Saviour's

mode of teaching his disciples to think of heaven as his "Father's house."

We have said that, at the period of their death, believers are immediately received into this house. By this we mean, that they are no sooner dead in one sense, than they are glorified in another. Instantly on the soul's leaving the body does it occupy its mansion in Christ's Father's house. In other words, there is no intermediate place of existence. If a man dies in Christ Jesus, he goes to Christ Jesus at once. If he dies in his sins, he goes immediately to "his own place." In opposition to this view, the Papists plead for a purgatory, the name they give to that intermediate place into which the souls of departed men go after death. But the very reason assigned for the necessity of such a consignment of the soul, is sufficient to divest the doctrine of all claim to our regards. They commit the soul to purgatory, that it may receive some kind of final punishment or discipline, previous to its reception into heaven, or that it may be purged of all its remanent corruptions, which it were not lawful to carry into heaven.

Here is a contrivance which you will at once observe contradicts many scriptures, but especially which goes far to destroy the efficacy of our Lord's propitiatory sacrifice. There must surely be something defective both in the atoning work of Christ, and in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, when, after death, priests and people must say masses, and contribute sums of money to the church, before God's people can get to heaven. What a degrading view does such an idea give us of the whole mediatorial service, and especially of the faithfulness and love of the Father! Upon the supposition of such an intermediate place of purgation, to which, by some unsanctified laws of spiritual

quarantine, the happy spirits of the saints are conveyed, and where they must abide, as in lazaretto, till the certifications of their readiness to enter heaven are made by some cunning and avaricious priests—upon such a supposition, their possession of heaven is after all hazardous. They may never see it. They are at the mercy of their surviving friends, who may be so wicked as never to pray for their safe passage out of purgatory, or so sordid as never to pay what the Catholic church demands as the fare of carrying souls from the purifying fires of purgatory into the light and peace of Paradise. Besides, the prayers of the priests may be given or withheld, may be cold or fervent, just as the parties are more or less disposed to be generous in their pecuniary gifts. The whole, indeed, is a monstrous construction of the man of sin to increase his spiritual despotism, and enrich his secular treasury. The wonder is, that so many thousands and millions of rational beings should allow themselves to be so easily deceived, and so openly robbed.

Let us be thankful that we have not been so taught Christ. Our faith in this matter is subject to his revelation; for the traditions and commandments of men we have no manner of reverence. Our common Christian belief upon this subject is expressed in such passages as the following: "Lord, remember me," prayed the thief on the cross, "when thou comest into thy kingdom." "To-day," replied the Redeemer, "shalt thou be with me in Paradise." "I have a desire to depart," said Paul, "and be with Christ, which is far better;" and again, "We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." In beautiful harmony with these doctrinal revelations is the prayer of the protomartyr Stephen. We are told that, just as his spirit was de-

parting, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and that he thus prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" a prayer, from which we must infer, that it was the persuasion of this eminent saint that, instantly on his death, his spirit would be with Christ, at the right hand of God.

Let us now meditate on the nature of the future state of blessedness, or on the glorious privileges to be enjoyed there.

## PART II.

### THE PRIVILEGES OF HEAVEN.

#### PERFECTION IN KNOWLEDGE—HOLINESS—HAPPINESS.

I. IN HEAVEN WE SHALL HAVE PERFECT KNOWLEDGE.—Here we "see through a glass darkly." Here "we know in part, and we prophesy in part." These texts describe the present state of our acquaintance, not so much with mere earthly sciences, as with the grander classes of truth which affect our moral and religious destinies. When we rejoice in the prospect of the removal of our present veils of ignorance, we should take care that it is not a mere intellectual gratification that we expect in heaven, wherein we shall intuitively, or by easy and quick deductions, grasp mighty truths appertaining to physical and abstract philosophies. There is something more exalted than mere mind or intellect in heaven. There is love; and the love of the mind to God—to God, who is love. We are rational

beings, and God is the wisest of beings; but we will not be attracted to him there so much by affinity in reason or mind as by the power of love. Hence our most intense passion will be the love of knowing God himself. He is an infinite excellence, and will afford, through all eternity, an inexhaustible subject of study to the saints. On entering heaven, therefore, they will be perfected in the knowledge of God, only thus far, that all the clouds which at present obscure what of his glory may by holy beings be seen, shall be removed. The successive discoveries of that glory shall be made as the ages of eternity roll onwards; though, ever as they roll, must there be a sense in which the celestial student may revive and utter his mundane adoration: "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself!" It must ever continue to be "the glory of God to conceal a thing," and ever the duty and delight of saints "to search out a matter," even when abiding in Christ's Father's house.

Farther, all that is necessary for their comfort in heaven will be made known to them there. They shall have no doubts or fears in reference to any subject whatever, either connected with their own, or with the interests of others. Not one particle of that ignorance which enters more or less into every species of infidelity is to be found in heaven; and so plainly and satisfactorily will all the ways of God to man on earth be explained, that over the remembrance even of their most bitter adversities they will raise their loudest and heartiest songs of gratitude. To our present ignorance of the close connection subsisting between providence and grace, between the events of our lot and the life of our souls, may be traced the gloom and melancholy which affliction carries in its train. But in heaven we shall see these connections; we shall have a vision

of God's mode of linking our then beatified state with these vicissitudes of time. The revolutions of all the larger and smaller wheels in the system of Providence, by which were produced the mightiest, and to us most resplendent results, will be seen as clearly and fully as we now follow out the simplest mechanical processes. In a word, we shall have in heaven no improper ideas upon any subject whatever; our minds will never be pre-occupied by what subsequent study is to discard; and though perpetually adding to our stores of sublime information, we shall never lose what has been already attained. It may be proper for a saint on earth to forget "the things that are behind," that he may all the sooner "reach forth to those things which are before." This is a consequence of his imperfect knowledge; it is because he does not "count himself to have apprehended." But a saint in heaven, though illimitable fields and unfathomable oceans of truth ever lie before him, never requires to obliterate the past to facilitate his progress. In this respect he has "already attained," and is already "perfect;" therefore, remembering all the things that are behind, he is at the same time continually treasuring up more and more invaluable intellectual and spiritual stores. So perfect, indeed, are his attainments in glory, that one saint, speaking by inspiration for all the rest, says, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

II. IN HEAVEN WE SHALL HAVE PERFECT HOLINESS.—In the Book of Revelation heaven is called "the holy Jerusalem;" concerning which city it is affirmed that "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, nor maketh a lie." An apostle also enjoins us to "follow

holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;" and our blessed Redeemer repeatedly assures us that "unless a man be born again, of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." The life of a believer, then, must necessarily be a perfecting of holiness "in the fear of the Lord," or a growing assimilation to the divine image, accompanied with hearty obedience to this commandment: "Sanctify yourselves, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God." As the final result of the whole preparatory process here, we are assured that at death the Saviour shall present us to his Father, "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," but "holy, and without blemish."

The souls of believers, then, are, from these scriptures, evidently made perfect in holiness when they enter heaven. This is a prerequisite to their presence in, and enjoyment of heaven. It is a prerequisite to their actual presence in it. Had they one spot or wrinkle left they should never pass through its blessed portals; and, even on the supposition of their getting within its walls, that spot and that wrinkle would completely incapacitate them from enjoying it. There would be no need for external force to drive them out again; they, themselves, by internal consciousness of unfitness for the place, and of dislike to all in it and about it, would speedily seek other and more congenial resorts. In order, then, to be made capable of enjoying it, the saints are made perfectly holy on entering it. Whatever may be their imperfections up to the article of death; whatever erroneous views they may have then, either of God, of heaven, or of themselves; whatever infirmity of temper or disposition may be found cleaving to them; that moment they die, away, far and forever away from their emancipated souls flee

all the remnants of their fall. All the faculties of their mind reach maturity, and resume their proper place in relation to the law of God; all their affections are at once properly adjusted and centred on Him who demands the heart of every creature, and who never fully gets that demand from saints till they are glorified. By the burden of sin here, the souls of his people are ever to some degree oppressed; hence they cannot fly away far hence and be with Christ. But when their souls become sinless, they take wings at once, and of their own accord they hie them off to God's right hand.

The glorified spirit knows its own home; and though now we may speculate as to the whereabouts of Paradise, we cease to do so when we are absent from the body. Then, by the holy instinctiveness of our perfection, we at once take the direction of heaven, and instantly we lie in the bosom of Redeeming Love. We sometimes gratify ourselves with the thought, that our souls at death will not feel at all abashed, as if in a strange state, or ignorant of the way upward; and that we shall be favored with the presence and guidance of angels in our passage through the heavens to the heaven of heavens. It may be so that we shall be thus escorted to our Father's house; but methinks a ransomed spirit would find its way to such a home without any attendant whatever. The very perfection of its holiness, binding it as it does to the heart of Jesus, and fascinating it towards Him from whom all holiness flows, would draw it directly into his blessed and adorable presence. It is here, in this cold, damp, dismal clime, that the believer feels himself at a loss sometimes to know the way. Here only it is that he ever feels himself a stranger and foreigner. When he dies, all these feelings die with him. He is made

perfect in holiness; consequently, he is at no loss what to do, where to go, or how to travel. So true is this, that holiness perfected is instantaneous with Jesus beheld and adored.

What a beautiful place, then, must heaven be! There is no sin in it; not a particle, not a shade of sin will be found there. Everything there will be holy as God is holy. All the skies will be cloudless; all the mansions will be complete; all the people will be pure; all the minds and all the morals will perfectly and brilliantly reflect the image of the Holy One; all the songs and all the services will have on them and in them "HOLINESS TO THE LORD," not in golden letters, but in the deep, ardent, and overawing emotions of consummate devotion. Hence, far hence are banished all feelings that jar with the glorified brotherhood. No selfish interests can obtrude, no angry passions can arise, no difference of opinions can interrupt the steady, stately flow of heaven's high harmonies. Hence, far, far hence are the influences of Satan. He can never enter here, nor any of his emissaries of evil. The "beauties of holiness" in God, and the reflection of these in the saints, are the fortifications of heaven. These are walls which devils cannot scale. Not only, then, are all holy, but holy all shall forever abide. Henceforth, in the presence of the Holy One of Israel, and collegiated with holy angels, they shall dwell together in the perfect consciousness that in their future history the scenes of the first Eden shall never be re-illustrated; that they shall neither sin any more, nor suffer any more; for the days of their sinning are ended.

III. IN HEAVEN WE SHALL HAVE PERFECT HAPPINESS.—Nothing else can be expected from a state of perfect knowledge and holiness. These are the two

great elements in the peace and joy of believing. We come on earth to know Christ as "of God, made unto us righteousness," and also "sanctification;" hence we have peace with God, and purity within. In heaven we attain to the perfection of our appreciation and enjoyment of Christ, and to the perfection of our holiness through his blood and Spirit; hence, also, our consummated happiness there. It is the design of the gospel to restore man to God; that is, to the image and friendship of God, both of which he lost in the fall; that is, by sin he lost the knowledge of God, and by sin he lost the favor of God. These two losses constituted him a wretched and miserable being. Things must, therefore, remain with him as they are, unless he avail himself of the gospel proposals. If he believes in the mediatorial work of Christ, then he is placed on the sure and certain way of a re-establishment in innocence and comfort; and when he dies, he finds himself re-conformed to God's image, and re-installed into God's love. He is, therefore, perfectly happy again. He needs no more than this to fill him with celestial joy. From this moment he is not, and cannot be, in any sense, subject to the consequences of sin. We do not say he is as happy now as if he never had sinned; but we say, that it may be he is happier. For now, not only does all the primeval joy of conscious holiness, as a rational creature of God, come back upon him in its full strength, but added to this, he feels himself the glorified subject of God's wonderful mercy in Christ Jesus. Again is he a holy creature; but now he is holy as one of the "ransomed of the Lord." Surely, then, if even on earth the mere hope of mercy made him so happy amid all the imperfections and trials of time, in heaven the full possession of life, glory, and immortality, in the pres-

ence of God and the Lamb, must perfect his blessedness.

In describing that blesedness, the scriptures use a great number of figures. Some of these present us with a negative, and others with a positive view of the subject. In the class of negative descriptions, we find that there is to be in heaven exemption, total and forever, from all manner of evil. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." "And there shall be no more curse." "And there shall be no night there." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat."

These beautiful passages intimate to us, that in heaven anything in the shape or of the nature of evil or suffering is impossible. However needful tribulation may be for militant saintship, for saintship triumphant it is useless. Tears and toils in the lot of good men here serve out their design when death separates soul and body; hence the emphasis of the account given of the celestial inhabitants: "These are they which have come out of great tribulation;" let it be noted, they have "come out of," and are never more to be in tribulation. What wise or merciful purpose could tribulation serve now? If it kept them humble and patient; if it wrought out of them all earthly-mindedness, and constantly augmented their spirituality; if it refined them so purely that they became, at death, fully meet for the inheritance above; what good object could it promote in heaven? None whatever. To afflict them still, after all their chastisements on earth, would indicate either imperfection in the work

of mediation, or wanton cruelty and injustice in the Almighty.

But the idea is profane: "ALL TEARS ARE WIPED AWAY." Did they weep on earth over their sins, especially over their ingratitude to that dear Lord who had bought them with his blood? Such tears cannot flow now; for they are not only sinless, but they know that it is impossible for them ever again to sin. Did rivers of waters run down their cheeks when they saw the law of God dishonored by abounding iniquity? Such rivers cannot flow now; for their eyes witness nothing in heaven but what is glorifying to God. Did the desolations of adversity send them to their solitudes, to weep over ruined fortunes and empty barnyards? Such tears they cannot shed in Eden; for no storm ever gathers in its clime, and no treasure once possessed there can be either pilfered or consumed. Did they sometimes weep when staggering under the dark menaces of future poverty to themselves and children, when realizing the terrors of calamities which might never come? Such tears they cannot weep in a land where they have the divine assurance that they shall never want, and that no evil of any kind, through all eternity, shall ever approach them. Did they weep over the cold and heartless repulses of men once considered their friends? In heaven they shall never form an acquaintance which shall not be ripened into friendship, and never possess a friend who shall not continue so forever.

Did they weep over their dead? Ay, and bitter, bitter tears these were, the most burning, perhaps, that ever welled up from the sacred and secret emotions of their natures. In Christ's Father's house they shall never so weep again. Why? Because there the mother again clasps her beautiful babes to her bosom,

all resplendent in the glory of that Saviour who carried them in his arms thither. There, she who was the solitary widow, and who for long had to tread the melancholy path of immaculate sorrow for the husband of her heart, and who perhaps had to accept of life's coldest conditions to secure for herself and orphans a piece of bread—there, she finds the desire of her eyes; and, in garments of white, they together walk the streets of the heavenly city. There the orphan, the poor, shivering, timid orphan, who stood over a father's and a mother's grave or ere he knew or could appreciate such a loss, and who struggled on unbefriended through the battles and the breezes of this selfish world, at length beholds and luxuriates in parental love. There the kind friends, the useful benefactors, the choice counsellors, to whom we have been indebted during our pilgrim passage for many comforts and precious aids, and whose departure from us to the world of spirits has made earth more gloomy, and life less joyous, shall again be met, and again enjoyed. In a word, all the blessed dead who have died in the Lord there meet again, and meet to part no more.

Did they weep over the hidings of their Father's face, and vex themselves sorely because they sometimes sought him and could not find him? Such tears they shall not shed again; for spiritual darkness cannot exist where God is seen face to face, and where the Sun of Righteousness never goes down. Did they, in fine, sometimes weep for very joy, when sudden deliverances were vouchsafed from dreaded deaths and impending griefs, or when fountains of unexpected mercies were opened upon them? In heaven it shall never so be. They shall not weep there, even though the joy be unspeakable and full of glory.

The falling of a single tear tells that there is a little infirmity about the region of the heart; some small fissure in the earthen vessel by which the over-burdened spirit seeks a momentary relief. In Paradise, however, the soul is equal to all the joy with which it may be filled, and will enlarge its capacities for the inletting of an uninterrupted and ever-swelling stream of divine and eternal blessedness.

But we spake of a class of blessings in heaven which are of a positive character, and which do not so much consist in exemption from evil as in the actual possession of the richest treasures which our Saviour can bestow. To such a theme who can do justice? We do not attempt it. It may just be noticed in closing the illustration, that whatever is requisite to carry forward the grand designs of redeeming love upon the glorified subjects of redeeming mercy, will be largely and constantly supplied. Happiness then will consist not merely in their consciousness of the absence of all sin and sorrow, but in the presence and enjoyment of all things and all beings who can contribute to their exquisite delectation. It were easy here to speak of the raptures of a saint who finds himself in the very presence of God; folded in the very arms that were once nailed to the cross for him; in the society of the angels, to him a new and valuable friendship; and in circles of dearly beloved relatives, singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. But it seems enough to mention, that in heaven saints shall actually see the Saviour. "They shall see his face," is revealed as one of the joys of Paradise; and, surely, no other joy will compare with it. At present we may feel as if it would make us happier to see there some whom we knew here; but it will not be so. Perfect love will seek first for Him who shed his blood for sinners; and it would be no

drawback to perfect happiness there, though the saint should never see any face but His own. All other sights will be pleasant because His face has been first seen.

But, after all, why should we tarry in our descriptions of such a state, upon the conceptions of fancy and the appropriateness of language? for, it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Let us then believe in the sublime truth that such a state is absolutely certain to every good man, and that if he will but possess his soul in patience for a very little, he will speedily be in the very midst of celestial bliss. When there, he shall have plenty of everything that can perfectly rejoice him; plenty of light from God and the Lamb, who are the light thereof; plenty of nourishment from the tree of life, the very leaves of which are for the healing of the nations; plenty of society; plenty of love; plenty of distinguished service; plenty of ennobling and satisfying study; and plenty of true glory and honor. There all the days of his mourning are ended; and there an existence of unending purity, utility, and peace, begins.

## PART III.

### THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN.

In bringing these discourses on the Mountains of the Bible to a conclusion, it seems peculiarly appropriate that the appeal should come direct from above to such gospel hearers as are as yet far from the kingdom of

heaven. From the summits of Sinai and Zion such men have been already addressed. They have heard the law—they have heard the gospel. Let them now hear that merciful and exalted High Priest who sits on mount Zion above, and who, from his glorious throne, issues to them this remarkable declaration: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." O, weighty words! O, solemn voice! Listen, ye that forget God, to the doctrine herein taught. It is a very simple one, but its importance you cannot overestimate. It is this: To be happy after death, you must be made holy before it: "you must be born again."

And what is implied in being born again? It means that your whole nature must be changed by the Spirit of God; you must be regenerated or created anew unto good works; your hearts must be purified by faith; your flesh must be crucified, with its affections and lusts; you must believe on the name of the Son of God. And why is it that you have not as yet undergone such a change as this? Taking the best view of your case, you have, peradventure, been depending on the means of grace to produce it; you have been settling down on your lees, and, it may be, taking it for granted that your Christian profession places you in a Christian state. If it be so, it is more than time that you opened your eyes to the truth. The means of grace must be used, but not absolutely trusted to as the regenerators of the soul. The Holy Ghost is the regenerator: "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." It is indeed proper to submit to the teaching of the Christian ministry; but neither that, nor Christian ordinances in full, can exert divine influence. It is a thought alike humiliating to the teacher and the taught, that no man ever converted

his own soul or the soul of his fellow-creatures. To the siege of the natural man may be carried the most brilliant talents; demonstrations clear as axioms may be submitted; treatises acute and unanswerable may be read and assented to; Persuasion may lavish her stores of melting entreaty; Terror may unveil the agonies she reserves for the wicked; Justice may brandish her flaming sword; Mercy may raise her beseeching voice; Pity may drop her solicitous tears; Love may unlock her affections, sweeten her embraces, and press her claims; but if this be all, the sinner will remain wrapped up in the silence and sullenness of spiritual death; for it is written, that "no man can say that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost."

Such is, unquestionably, the doctrine of the Bible; and such, still, is the voice from heaven to man. To the unconverted, then, let that voice sound an alarm. The new birth is from above. Be persuaded to look to the Divine Spirit for such a change; and while you cease not to avail yourselves of every instituted help, direct your waiting eyes to heaven itself for the blessing that makes these effectual to your salvation. Disregarding, as you have done, the necessity of the influences of the Holy Ghost, you may cease to wonder that the gospel has not as yet been made to you the "power of God, and the wisdom of God."

But it may be that you have known this great Bible doctrine, and that you have been perverting it. Too many, alas! do so, to their ruin. Sinner, have you sheltered yourself under the cavil, that if conversion be the work of God's Spirit then you are not responsible for remaining in unregeneracy? If so, suffer the word of exhortation. We do not hesitate to declare that it is your duty, notwithstanding, to

secure your being born again, in order to enter at last the kingdom of heaven. Yes, this is your duty. God says to you, "Work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." "Repent, and be converted." "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." We do not say that such passages enjoin upon you that you are to convert your own souls, but that it is your duty sincerely to aim at this, in the use of God's appointed means, and in dependence on the promise of the Spirit to render them successful. Taking the appropriate scriptures together, it is clearly taught in the word of God that unrenewed men must work, but not irrespective of the divine aid. Hence, at the last day, the wicked shall be condemned, not because they could not, but because they would not thus work. For the influence that begets the change, you are not responsible, but for the proper handling of the instrumentalities appointed for that end, you certainly are. What, for instance, hinders any man within reach of the gospel from going to hear that gospel preached, from reading the word of God, from addressing God on his knees often in prayer, or from using any of the ordinary means of spiritual instruction? There are no impediments, in general, in the way. Every man is just as free and able to use these with such a view, as he is to go about his lawful avocations, or prosecute to a successful termination any scheme of his own, upon principles and with aids proper to its accomplishment. While, then, God has established a connection between the sincere use of these means and your regeneration, and has promised to make the one effectual to the other, it is your duty, in this way, to seek after your new birth; and you

neglect it at the peril of being charged at last with refusing to be converted.

If any are still disposed to prosecute this perilous cavil, we would direct their attention to the case of the man who was commanded, though a paralytic, to arise and walk. When he was laid down at Christ's feet he was physically powerless. Had he excused himself from the attempt, by pleading incapacity, he would have remained uncured. But he heard the order, and considering that he had no right to call its practicability in question, he proceeded to obey it. He was cured. In the act of obedience, he received power from above. The sinner has his lesson before him here. Admitting his own unworthiness and inability, let him nevertheless believe God to be sincere, and, taking him at his word, let him diligently work, and the end is as certain; he will be "made a new creature;" he will be put in the way to gain eternal life; he will be brought to the feet of Christ.

The objection under review is an infidel one, and rests upon a principle which those that use it in things spiritual never think of acting upon in things temporal. It is equally true that the labor of the husbandman cannot command the fruitfulness of the earth. God's blessing alone can do this. It is equally true that, under alarming illness, no medicine has intrinsic power to arrest disease and confirm health. God's blessing does this too. But whoever on this account would neglect the tilling and draining of the fields, or the scattering of the seed, or the use of the wholesome remedy? And if not in minor matters would sane men so act, why, in the weighty matters of salvation and eternity, do they thus stultify and destroy themselves? We have only to remind God of his gracious promise of the Spirit, and to be very diligent in the

use of the means of conversion, and we shall succeed; we do not say how soon, but in God's own time. His delaying to send down the divine afflatus to quicken our hearts ought not to discourage us. God will assuredly be found of every one that thus seeketh him; "for the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

Let the unconverted ponder these serious truths, and decide accordingly. They cannot decide too soon, for of one thing they may be assured, that they shall never enter heaven as they are. They must be born again. Do any ask, where is the necessity for this change? With our reply let us close our remonstrances, and may the blessing of the Spirit accompany them!

No human being can be made holy till he is regenerated. Unless he is holy, he cannot see God. To see God is to be in heaven; therefore, to be glorified, he must first of all be regenerated and sanctified. Who are these that are already in heaven? "These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

But, sinner, the saints are not only holy, they are eminently useful beings. Assuredly they are not idle in Christ's Father's house; "they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Now, in such exercises, how could a sinful spirit engage? It would oppose every feeling of its natnre; especially would it jar against that selfishness which is the most powerful principle of its depravity. It would be at a loss what to do with itself in such society as it would find

there, where benevolence and love are the reigning and universal virtues. To the general good all selfish interests are subjected. Such a spirit would therefore find itself alone, miserably alone in heaven, having none to sympathize, none to associate with him. The pure spirits of that holy clime would desert him, abhor him; and, in due time, he would be compelled to leave these hallowed mansions, and seek other regions congenial with his unsanctified nature.

Seeing, then, that men who would be happy after death must be regenerated, and made progressively holy before they die, O! "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?" Be entreated to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Let the principal business of life be preparation for eternity; and in the course of that preparation never forget these two things: first, that to be saved, you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, secondly, to believe in him, you must come to the Holy Ghost, and earnestly implore his gracious aids. "Faith is the gift of God." You have but to ask, and you will receive both that Spirit and that faith; for, says our Lord, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Hear, then, the voice from heaven: "YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN." "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." O, be persuaded, without farther procrastination, to accept of God's great salvation! Think of the shortness of time, and of the evil days that draw nigh. Remember that where the tree falls there it lies. Arise and record this as your holy purpose: I will go to the

Father, and say, "I have sinned against heaven, and against thee;" I will go to the Son, and say, "Have mercy upon me, thou son of David;" and I will go to the Spirit, and say, "Sanctify me through thy truth, thy word is truth." Do this, and do it now, and then the best robe will be brought forth and put upon you; Redeeming Love will embrace you in her arms: and the entrance of God's word will give you light, and guide you safely home to the heavenly Jerusalem.

THE END.

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